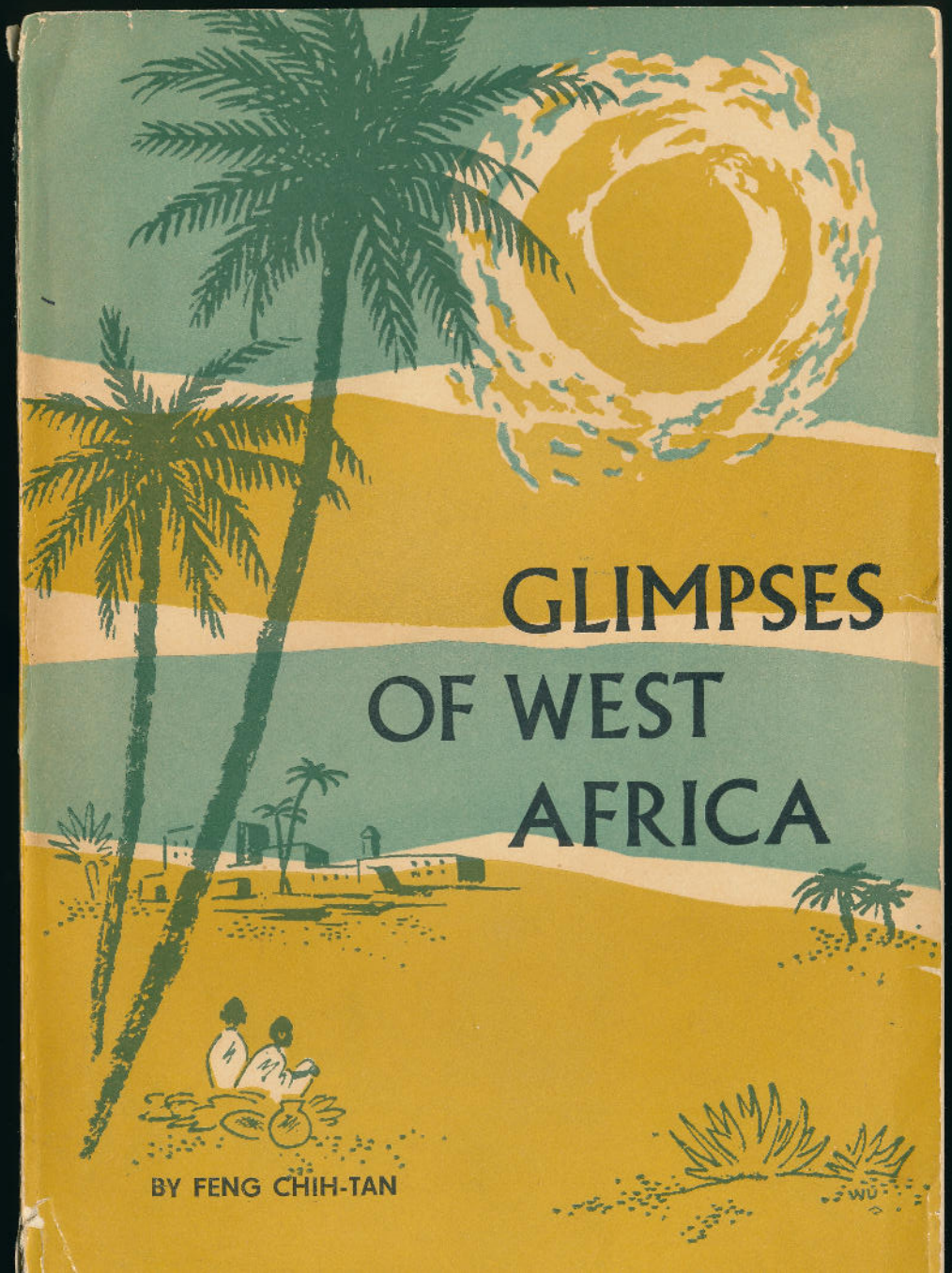

GLIMPSES
OF WEST
AFRICA
BY FENG CHIH-TAN
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GLIMPSES OF WEST AFRICA

Feng Chih-tan

ALAN BOMSEK

FOREIGN LANGUAGES PRESS
PEKING 1963

Printed in the People's Republic of China

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Editor's Note

In the spring of 1961, the Chinese-African People's Friendship Association accepted the invitation of several African countries and sent its first delegation on a friendly visit to West Africa.

The delegation, representative of 650 million Chinese people, was led by Liu Chang-sheng, President of the Chinese-African People's Friendship Association. It visited eight countries in West Africa — Guinea, Mali, Ghana, Niger, Upper Volta, Senegal, Togo and Dahomey. During the tour of these countries the delegation conveyed the fraternal greetings of the Chinese people to the African people, congratulated them on the victories they had achieved, and pledged support for their continuous and just struggle against imperialism and colonialism and for the safeguarding of national independence. Through its activities the delegation enhanced the mutual understanding and friendly co-operation between the peoples of China and these countries.

Although China and Africa are thousands of miles apart, the flow of the profound friendship, cemented in struggle, between the Chinese and African people cannot be blocked by high mountains or broad oceans. Like many African countries, China long suffered from invasion and oppression by the imperialists and colonialists. But having finally defeated the aggressors, the Chinese people have now stood up. The victory of the Chinese people's revolution and their great achievements in socialist construction have greatly encouraged the African people

in their own struggle for national independence. At the same time the growing national liberation movement in Africa constantly spurs the Chinese people to build up their own motherland with even greater vigour.

The delegation was most cordially welcomed and received by the government leaders and the people in all these countries. When receiving the delegation President Sékou Touré of the Republic of Guinea said, "In the African people's struggle for political, economic and social liberation, we are sure China will give us its unreserved and steadfast support. We have not the slightest doubt about this." Yes, the 650 million Chinese people will always stand with the African people.

The author of this pamphlet was a member of the delegation. With the deep sympathy of a Chinese towards the African people, he eulogizes the heroic struggle of the peoples of West Africa against imperialism and colonialism and lays bare the crimes of the Western colonialists in enslaving and oppressing the people of West Africa. With his zealous pen he also depicts the manners, customs and beautiful scenery of the countries.

We hope this pamphlet will help to further promote mutual understanding between the Chinese and African peoples as well as mutual understanding among the people of the African countries.

We sincerely hope that the heroic people of African countries will continuously score new victories and achievements in their struggle for national independence, the eradication of the remnant forces of colonialism, and for the development of national economy and culture and the building of a happy new life.

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The delegation of the Chinese-African People's Friendship Association places a wreath at the foot of the Martyrs' Monument in Guinea

Liu Chang-sheng, head of the delegation, greets Mme. Veuve Felix Roland Moumié





Two women members of the Chinese delegation marching in the International Working Women's Day demonstration at Kissidougou, Guinea



Arch of Independence on the February 28 Road, Accra, Ghana

The ceremonial naming of Lumumba Square in Bamako, Mali



Mali militiamen on the march





Members of the friendship delegation talk with Ghanaian coal-miners

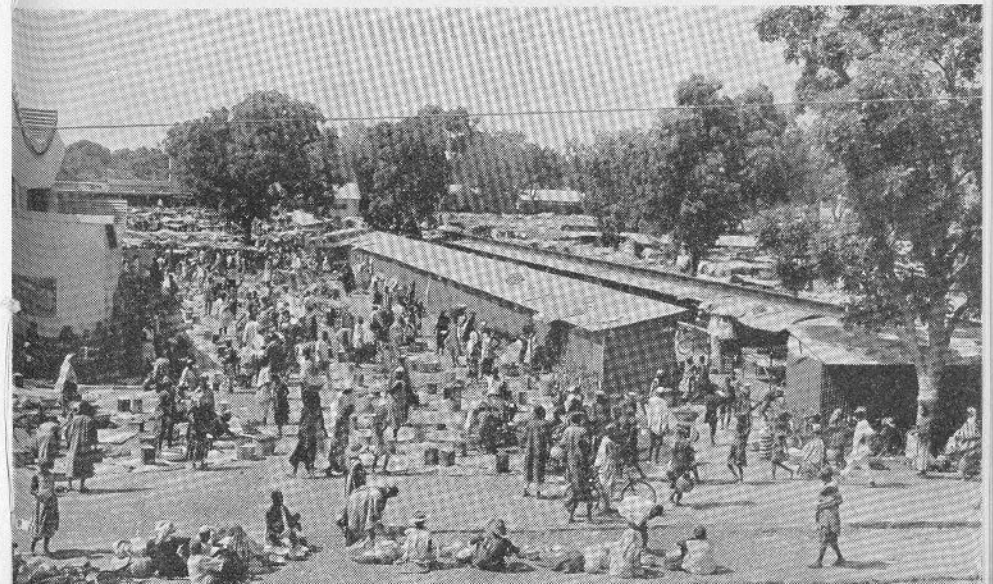
Niger friends hand out tasty pieces of barbecued mutton to the visitors



Earthenware vessels on sale in the market at Niamey, Niger



A busy scene in the market place in Ouagadougou, Upper Volta



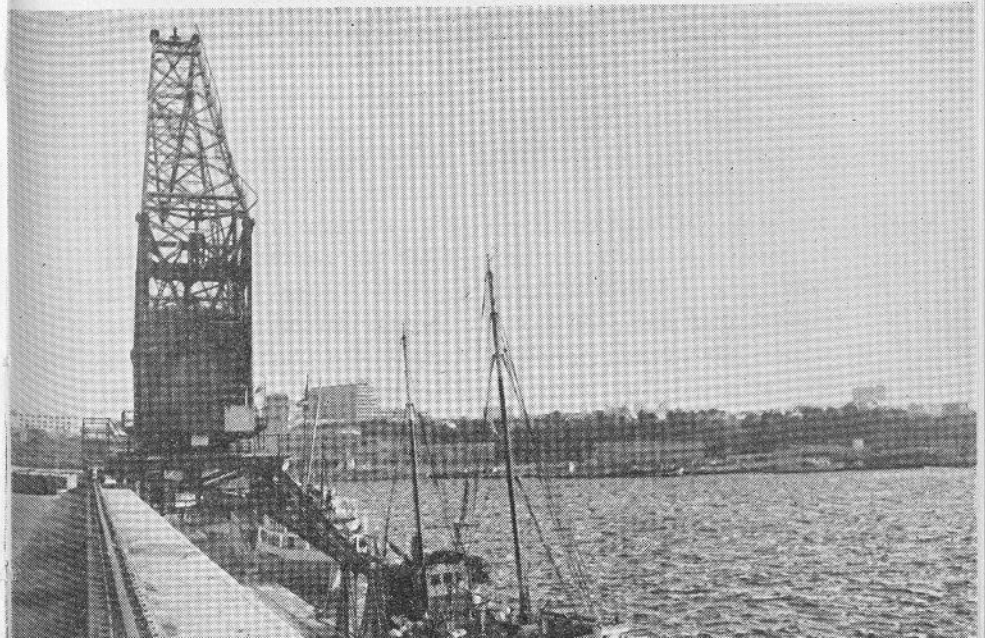


Fourth-graders in a state primary school in Lomé, Togo



Palm groves, Dahomey

No. 1 Wharf at the port of Dakar, Senegal





The delegation of the Chinese-African People's Friendship Association visits a museum in Abomey, Dahomey

A HEROIC NATION HAS STOOD UP

The Delegation of the Chinese-African People's Friendship Association left Peking in late February 1961 and travelled via Moscow and Prague on a friendly visit to West Africa. We felt the sharp change of seasons immediately we got off the aeroplane in Conakry, capital of the Republic of Guinea, on March 1. Within two days, we had stepped from chilly early spring into mid-summer.

The verses of a Guinean poet suddenly came to my mind:

Sun —
How abundant is the sunshine in the African sky!
.
Your intense heat symbolizes the ferment of new life.

IN THE STREETS

As the cars in which we were travelling speeded out of the aerodrome, a broad red tract stretched before us. Rows of mango trees, heavy with fruit, lined the road. The light-coloured, neat houses with their fences entwined with flowers made a lovely picture. Women dressed in native-style, colourful dresses walked to and fro in the street, their black, smooth arms gleaming under the sun. Some wore printed frocks bearing the portrait of Patrice Lumumba, a testimony to this great Congolese national hero. On their gaily-kerchiefed heads, they

carried trays, baskets or pots, containing bananas, mangoes and other fresh goods for the market. Some also carried children on their backs. Women were using gourd-ladles to fill buckets at the water-taps in the street. They carried the water-buckets on their heads to their homes. It was unusual to see men carrying bundles on their heads. Their clothing consisted of shirt and vest, or the national costume resembling the Arabian robe. There were people who were wearing felt hats despite the scorching sun. . . .

AT THE PICTURESQUE COAST

I visited many coasts and enjoyed many beautiful scenes by the sea. At some places, the rollers rage like devils with wide-open mouths, threatening to swallow everything. At others, the motley-coloured billows, like hundreds of thousands of horses charging to the accompaniment of battle drums, roll and tumble in from distant horizons. Sometimes the white-crested, surging waves dance wildly, sending out countless sprays, as if dragons were frolicking in the water. But at Conakry the sea is as quiet as a pensive maiden. The gentle waves break into little flurries of white foams as they caress the golden sand and strike the black iron-ore reefs, which seem to rear their heads as the tide ebbs.

When the dawn-tide rises, the rippling of the waves against the shore, the crowing of cocks and the chirping of birds, mingle in one harmonious symphony. A thin mist hangs over the sea, and the bauxite-rich Los Islands facing the port, are only partly visible, but as the sun disperses the haze, the Los with their red soil and green forests are revealed; a colourful natural screen. Steamships, five thousand tonners, weave backwards and forwards across the waters. In the fishing season of

February and March, when the high tide comes and the torrent is swift, hundreds of sailing-boats set out, with the fishermen to cast the nets over the sea.

The fishermen live in villages on the Los Islands, where bauxite is also mined. The fine soft sandy beaches of the islands are surrounded by green trees and provide ideal resting places for holiday-makers and swimmers. The fishing boats work in pairs, and when the floats rise, the fish leap and bound in the seine-nets and the fishermen roar with laughter. In the evening, viewed from the coast of Conakry, the flickering lights of the Los look like the blinking stars in the distance.

CONAKRY, CAPITAL OF THE GUINEAN PEOPLE

Conakry was a small village of about twenty households at the close of the 19th century. French merchants arrived and set up a colonial company there, and began to exploit the Guinean people by exchanging poor-quality ammunition, weapons, and weak alcohol, for agricultural and other valuable local products. A small port was built at Conakry in 1895. Its trade gradually increased and the port expanded. Conakry thus became the centre for the colonial domination of Guinea. Its outstanding role in the anti-colonial struggle has made it famous as a heroic city.

Conakry is situated on the Atlantic coast, and is a city beaming with youthful radiance. The Presidential Palace, over which now floats the national flag of the Republic of Guinea, is near the beach. It was formerly the French colonial governor's office. In the past the palace represented enslavement, it is now the symbol of the victory of the Guinean people.

There is a foundation stone in front of the Presidential Palace inscribed, "The Republican Square". A bronze statue of Ballay,

the first French governor of Guinea, once stood on this foundation, but now, along with the statues of other colonialists, it has been dismantled by the Guinean people and thrown on the beach. The days when the colonialists could swagger round and ride roughshod over the Guinean people have gone for ever.

The headquarters of the Democratic Party of Guinea is housed in one of the buildings in the capital and attracts much attention. It appears to be just an ordinary council hall, but has witnessed many important events. Since Guinea won its independence, a number of important international conferences, including the Second Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Conference, the meeting of the Afro-Asian Solidarity Fund Committee and the World Teachers' Conference, have been held there. Many huge posters put up for conferences still decorate this hall, to quote from a few, "Genuine peace can only be attained when imperialism has met its doom!", "Strengthen Afro-Asian solidarity and fight for the final elimination of imperialism and colonialism throughout the world!" and "Schools must serve the cause of national independence and African solidarity!" Such militant slogans have, like a beacon light, illuminated the Guinean people's path forward.

THE DEEP FRIENDSHIP BETWEEN THE TWO PEOPLES

Conakry brims over with friendship towards the Chinese people. Walking in the streets, we saw "Liberation" trucks presented by our government to Guinea, flashing past. The workers in these trucks waved friendly greetings to us. A primary schoolboy hurried forward to greet us, saying that he knew about China, "The Chinese people all love to work and China can make good machines."

In the centre of Conakry stands a grand classical Chinese building, the Exhibition Hall of China's Achievements in Economic Construction. It was presented to the Guinean Government by our government. The exhibition closed sometime ago but the building remains as a reminder of the friendship between the two peoples. The exhibition lasted 37 days during which 310,000 visitors were registered. Practically all Conakry, a city with 120,000 inhabitants, went to see it; one hotel waiter visited it ten times. Many people travelled over a hundred, and sometimes several hundred kilometres, to see the exhibition. More than three thousand people wrote their comments in the visitors' books, expressing the Guinean people's warm feelings towards the Chinese people. One wrote, "We would like to thank the Chinese people, for they have exploded the lie that the so-called inferior peoples are destined to live under the domination and exploitation of foreigners!" "The achievements in national construction that the Chinese people have made," wrote another, "are great examples to be followed by the Guinean people as well as by all African people!" Some warmly wished "Good health to Chairman Mao Tse-tung for many years to come!" and proclaimed "Long live the People's Republic of China!" The Guinean people's praise for China's socialist construction is a great encouragement to the Chinese people.

BEFORE THE MONUMENT TO THE MARTYRS

We members of the Delegation of the Chinese-African People's Friendship Association stood in front of a granite monument in Conakry to pay silent tribute to the countless martyrs who laid down their lives in the struggle for national independence of Guinea and the rest of Africa. Comrade Liu

Chang-sheng, head of our delegation, laid a wreath at the foot of the monument in the name of the delegation as well as on behalf of the 650 million Chinese people. I slowly raised my head and scanned the monument, on it was inscribed in large letters, "To the Memory of the Anti-Colonialist Martyrs Who Sacrificed Their Lives for the Republic". It stood like a giant before us. The monument is more than a magnificent piece of granite, it is the cornerstone of the new-born Republic of Guinea, and is permeated with the blood of countless Guinean patriots. It represents the blood of the martyrs which has nurtured the soil and made Guinea blossom, as she does today.

THE PEOPLE REMEMBER

The colonialists tried in a thousand and one ways to make the Guinean people forget the history, the national heroes and the brilliant traditions of their motherland. They even went so far as to spread untruths through the primary school textbooks, saying that the Guineans and the French had the same forefathers, the Gauls, who were distinguished by their blue eyes and yellow whiskers. They described the much-esteemed national heroes like Samory Touré as "barbarians". A French professor of the University of Paris, attempting to discredit the native people who fought against the colonialists, once wrote, "People should not speak of cold-blooded bandits and murderers like El Hadj Omar and Samory as 'real heroes' who fought the white people." But in spite of all the abuses and distortions of the colonialists, the Guinean people have never forgotten their own heroes and history. Though the Guinean people had no written language to record their past, the history of the Guinean people and the great deeds of their national heroes have been handed down and eulogized from generation to generation.

Stories of their deeds have been passed down from mouth to mouth and continued to live in the hearts of the people. The colonialists found no way of silencing this voice. During our stay in Guinea, I heard a noted national singer sing the *Song of Samory* in a rich, cheerful voice:

Samory has set out for a battle,
Samory has set out for a battle.
Who does Samory set out to fight?
Samory is fighting the enemy of the nation!

The Guinean people are proud of their history, proud of Samory Touré who fought heroically against the French colonial invaders and who preferred a martyr's death to surrender. He was born in the eighteen-thirties in a small village in Upper Guinea. He was the son of a peddler, and took over his father's business when he was young. Later he enlisted and became a professional soldier. With Bissandougou as the centre, he helped from 1870 to 1875 to unite many of the surrounding tribes, ended the inter-tribal strife in these regions, and established the flourishing state of Ouassoulou. When the French colonial forces intruded into this part of the country he led the people in resolute resistance, using guerrilla tactics and replying to the aggressors with a policy of scorched earth. Wherever his forces retreated, all the inhabitants and materials were evacuated, not one old man or a grain of seed being left behind for use by the enemy. While organizing local blacksmiths to produce rifles after the French pattern, he took advantage of the differences and quarrels between the British and French imperialists to obtain ammunitions from Sierra Léone. He displayed brilliant military talent during the anti-French war. Samory's troops working with the forces of the Toucouleurs and Bambaras along the Senegal and Niger Rivers, fought many a bloody battle, resisting and pinning down the French colonial army for nearly twenty years. Un-

fortunately, he was captured in the last battle on September 29, 1898, and was exiled to a small island in the Ogôoué River in Gabon, where he ended his glorious life in 1900.

THE FLAME HAS NOT BEEN EXTINGUISHED

Samory is dead. But his heroic spirit of resistance against colonialism and in defence of his motherland lives for ever in the hearts of the Guinean people, and will never be extinguished. The struggle against colonialism never stopped between 1900 to 1914. The uprising led by Alpha Yaya and the resistance movement of the people in the forest districts, wrote another moving chapter in Guinea's history of struggle for national independence. Since World War II, President Sékou Touré and the Democratic Party of Guinea have carried on this glorious fighting tradition, and under different historical conditions have led the people of the whole country in a new struggle for national independence. A new generation of heroes has arisen!

The name of the heroine Balia Camara is known in every town and village in Guinea. This glorious name is to be heard everywhere. There is a *Song of Balia,* and a college, an athletic team and a battalion in the army are named after this heroine. The Balia Express travels the railway, and there is a Balia Hall in the Presidential Palace.

Balia was a country woman, a rank-and-file member of the Guinean Democratic Party. She lived in the small village of Don Don in Lower Guinea, where a branch of the Guinean Democratic Party was established and the anti-colonialist activities started in 1955. A troop of French colonial soldiers with loaded guns came to the village in search of the branch Party leaders, and tried to intimidate the villagers into betrayal of the

officials. Balia stepped forward in vigorous protest against the colonialists and asked why the organization of the Democratic Party in the countryside should be banned. The French colonialists answered by piercing her body with bayonets. She was expecting a child. The heroic mother, and her unborn child both perished.

The murder of Balia aroused tremendous indignation among the Guinean people. Her funeral procession was a vehement indictment of the French colonial rule by the people of Guinea. It took place in Conakry and was six kilometres long. Sékou Touré and the members of the National Political Bureau carried the coffin. The French colonial troops threateningly surrounded the mourners, but the people in the procession were not cowed and escorted Balia's coffin into the cemetery. After burying the body of the heroine, they continued their struggle for freedom.

SONG OF INDEPENDENCE

Ever since Guinea asserted her independence, the Guinean women and the members of the Democratic Party have commemorated Balia's death by paying silent tribute to her every year on March 8, International Working Women's Day. We happened to be visiting Kissidougou, a remote forest district in the southeast of Guinea, on March 8, 1961 and took part in the local mass rally for the celebration of the 51st anniversary of Women's Day. The women of Kissidougou, like their sisters in Conakry, held a big demonstration. The dense mango forests were decked with numerous tri-coloured Guinean national flags. The women carried posters, demanding that "The old and neo-colonialists get out of the Congo!" and "Down with neo-colonialism!" They sang the *Song of Independence,*

which, echoed through the forest, and seemed to fly over the Guinean mountain ranges, above the swift torrents of the Konkouré River and resound on the beaches of the turbulent Atlantic Ocean:

Ah, our fathers and our mothers,
We want no humiliation,
We want no colonial rule.
We have gained national independence.
Our flag has risen,
Flying over the Guinean territory,
Flying in the Guinean sky.

On the African continent, a heroic nation has stood up.

FLY, THE EAGLE OF AFRICA!

THE SHACKLES HAVE BEEN SHATTERED

"The shackles of the slaves have been shattered; the eagle of freedom, beating its powerful wings, flies into the sky," solemnly declared President Sékou Touré when the independence of Guinea was proclaimed. A nation which has won its liberty will never allow itself to be enslaved again.

The French colonialists have vainly tried to re-fetter this eagle of Africa with new shackles, but none of their plans has come to fruition. The Guinean people like an eagle soaring high into the sky, defy the threats of the imperialists, and take their own broad course with heads erect.

Since its independence, Guinea has adopted a series of strong measures to clear the colonial forces out of their country. The Guinean Government compelled the French colonial troops to get out of Guinea at the end of 1958. The following April, it rooted out the remaining French officials from government departments. In March 1960, it declared Guinea's withdrawal from the franc area and issued its own currency. During the next two months, the Guineans twice frustrated attempts by the imperialists to undermine the government. In August it ordered a number of French banks to close down. Guinea has since established its own first state bank, aviation company, trading company, banana and fruit bureau and state-owned department store. The French power and water companies in Conakry

were nationalized in January 1961. A government run by the Guineans and a national armed force commanded by Guinean officers now exist in Guinea, the first for sixty years.

A PAGE IN THE GLORIOUS HISTORY OF STRUGGLE

Emile Tompapa, the director of Guinea's national radio station, received us in his office when we visited the station. He recounted a glorious episode of struggle.

On the eve of the "referendum" of September 28, 1958 on de Gaulle's "New Constitution", the Radio Guinea building was suddenly surrounded by French paratroops. There were seven Africans and seven Frenchmen inside the building. The seven Africans were a combat corps under the leadership of the Guinean Democratic Party. Armed with weapons, they were ready to prevent any interference. They kept a close watch on the Frenchmen in order to ensure that the Democratic Party's broadcast went on the air uninterrupted. The people crowded around the loudspeakers in the streets waiting for the message to go out. Then came the call of the Democratic Party — "Independence or death!" The people were well prepared for the "referendum". Ninety-five per cent of the electorate went to the ballot-boxes and filled in the purple papers, voting against the proposed "referendum". The French colonialists' "referendum" plot was thus completely defeated. In retaliation, they deliberately burned out a 4,000-watt transmitter. The station was left with only a 1,000-watt transmitter, which could not carry the voice more than 150 kilometres. Despite this setback, Radio Guinea started a new page in its history.

RELYING ON THE MILITANT WILL

Director Emile Tompapa said, "The task then before us was to carry on the work with a militant will and we must rely on our own strength." The French technicians left the station, and the seven Africans took over, sending out broadcast messages for over fifty hours each week, including twenty-eight in the local language. The African technicians cancelled all the programmes prepared by Radio-diffusion et Télévision Françaises and ceased broadcasting decadent Western music, which had done so much poisoning towards the soul of Africa. The material conditions at the radio station were very poor. There was only a very limited supply of tapes for the recording machine, and many recordings had to be erased in order to provide tapes for new recordings. The contents of the programme were however entirely changed, and the French music was replaced by Guinean national tunes.

Radio Guinea, although small in scale, brims with enthusiasm. Its functionaries, regardless of long hours of duty, work tirelessly for their motherland. "Some comrades work from early morning until 11 o'clock at night," said the director. We noticed a technician in one of the narrow work rooms. He was writing mathematical formulas on a blackboard in order to pass on his knowledge to his colleagues. There was a worn-out machine in a small laboratory. It was not discarded, the station technical research team used it for the study of technical problems. "We are all students here," said the director. "We have no teachers. Everybody, including myself, has to acquire technical skill. Learn while working, is our motto!"

In a little over two years the Guinean national radio station has developed and grown up without the technicians of the imperialist countries. It can now boast of twenty function-

aries. The power of the transmitter is nineteen times its former strength. A new national radio station is planned. The voice of Guinea, once completely suppressed by the imperialists, is now heard every day. Radio Guinea constantly exposes the imperialists' intrigues against Africa. It denounces the crimes of the imperialist bloc which, headed by the United States, utilizes the United Nations to invade the Congo. It firmly supports the Congolese, Algerian, and the peoples of all other African countries, in their struggles for national independence.

"THERE ARE NO FRENCHMEN HERE!"

The Guinean people are very proud that they are running their own country. There is a state-owned department store in Conakry, which is patronized by numerous customers every day. It is a fairly large shop, and employs about ninety assistants, most of them women. They wear neat blue uniform and are cordially attentive to customers. There are neither French goods nor French employees in this shop, and with the exception of one Sudanese, all of the staff are Guineans.

I visited this first state-owned department store with great interest. The manager was not available, so I was introduced to the accountant who proudly stated: "There is not a single Frenchman in our store. They said we would not be able to manage without them, but as you can see, we are not doing badly!" They were doing very well indeed, as the following comparison shows. When we were there business was good, and the state-shop was always packed. The one remaining French store on the opposite side of the street had scarcely any customers, and was obviously losing its business. Small wonder that the accountant said, "The French are filled with envy and

hatred towards this new shop." Hatred and envy could not save them, and the colonialists could do nothing but stare and sigh in front of the shop-windows of the prosperous Guinean department store.

When Guinea, safeguarding its national sovereignty, withdrew from the franc area in 1960, it issued its own currency and took over several French banks. The de Gaulle Government was so angry that it decided, in November, to ban all exports to Guinea. Guinea was not strangled by this action. The state-owned shops still have a rich supply of goods, extensive trade with the socialist and some other countries having been developed. Though Guinea cannot as yet produce large quantities of daily necessities, it will surely do so in the future. There is not the slightest doubt that there will be an abundance of locally-made goods in the Guinean shops. The boycotting policy of imperialism is helping to deal a death-blow at itself. The French bourgeois newspaper *France Observateur* has admitted that the French Foreign Ministry's policy will rapidly elbow French influence out of the Guinean market.

OPEN THIS MYSTERIOUS JEWELLERY BOX

There are inexhaustible natural resources buried beneath the soil of Guinea. Conakry itself is situated on a large iron-ore deposit on the Kaloum Peninsula, the total reserves of which are estimated at 2,000 million tons. There are also deposits of bauxite on the Los Islands. The Fria bauxite deposits are situated over a hundred kilometres to the northeast of Conakry and consist of a stretch of red-soil-land forty kilometres in circumference. The local vice-chairman of the trade union told us that sixty per cent of the deposit was high-grade aluminum. "The quality of Guinea's bauxite ranks

highest in the world. There are iron and bauxite-ore deposits all over our country," he added. "They stretch from the hinterland right to the boundaries." Our Guinean friends told us that a visiting Western "specialist" once said that the whole of Guinea was a store of jewels waiting to be opened, and the best way to get at these treasures was to build a huge boat and ship its 2,700,000 people out of the country. This wild fancy of the "specialist" shows how covetous the Western countries have been of Guinea's riches. Monopoly companies like the Fria Company, La Compagnie des Bauxites du Midi, and La Compagnie Minière de Conakry still control the mining of most of Guinea's bauxite and iron deposits.

In the southeast forest districts of Beyla, Macenta and Kissidougou there are glistening diamonds. Since the discovery of these precious stones in 1934, French and Franco-British companies have taken away nearly two million carats of high-quality diamonds. In the Siguiri region which borders on Mali, people began panning gold-bearing sand in the river beds in the Middle Ages. The gold was taken to the old capital of Ghana by merchants.

Guinea also yields an abundance of bananas, coffee and other palm products. Rare tropical animals live in its mountain regions. Huge trees which seem to touch the sky abound in the forest districts. The rivers are great potential sources of power.

We enjoyed a wonderful scene in Kissidougou, when it rained kapok. Drift after drift was washed from the tall trees and danced in the air, reminding us of the snow in northern China.

Guinea has a vast natural source of wealth, but sixty years of French colonial rule has reduced the country to utter poverty. It has only a little industry consisting of a few very small rice-mills, soap factories, fruit canning and timber processing plants. Most of the rural areas were very backward before Guinea

became independent. The majority of the peasants still used primitive knives and hand-tools to work the land which they cleared by fire. President Sékou Touré was correct when he said that the Guinean people were sitting on a rich jewellery box while suffering dire poverty. The Guinean people, now standing on their own feet, are determined to wrest open this wonderful jewellery box.

A NEW NATIONAL EDUCATION

The French colonial rule resulted in prolonged cultural backwardness among the Guinean people, and 95 per cent of them were illiterate. Only nine per cent of the school-age children went to school.

Independence has brought about a rapid development of national education. The number of students in primary schools in 1960 was 84,000, as compared with 32,000 prior to independence. At the time of our visit there were 4,000 students in secondary schools as compared with 1,600 before independence. The number of primary and secondary schools, as well as the number of students, continues to increase by leaps and bounds. The headmasters and teachers in the primary schools are all Guineans. In the secondary schools the headmasters are Guineans, but there are still some French teachers. Guinea was badly in need of teachers when she achieved her independence, and the withdrawal of a number of French teachers created some difficulties at first. The Guinean Government was soon able to relieve the situation with teachers from socialist and other countries.

Mr. Béhanzin, Director of the General Office of the Ministry of Education, told us that the French colonialists tried to consolidate their rule by creating a slave mentality among the

Africans, and causing the African intellectuals to ignore their countries' history, national heroes and forefathers, despise and throw away their own national cultural tradition, and become worshippers of "Western civilization". "The new Africa opposes such education," said Mr. Béhanzin. "That's why Guinea has to institute a thorough reform of both the content and the system of education."

At the end of March 1961, the Seventh Congress of the Guinean Teachers' Trade Union, the first congress of the Guinean educational workers after independence, was held in Conakry. Many of the delegates brought forward proposals for educational reform, and said that the Guinean students must become familiar with Guinea's own history and geography as well as its political, economic and social situation, and not confine their learning to facts about other countries. How could a Guinean run his own country well when he did not even understand it, they asked. Kaba Mamady, Chairman of the Confédération Nationale des Travailleurs de Guinée, also said, "The students are very familiar with Louis XIV and other French kings, but ignorant of national heroes like Samory Touré. They have a good knowledge of French geography and plants, but know very little about the Nile and the Niger. This situation must be changed. National culture must be restored and developed."

It is precisely the operation of these principles and ideas which is beginning to shed light throughout Guinea. The new national educational system of Guinea, which started from nothing, is now steadily developing.

After we left Guinea, the National Congress of the Democratic Party of Guinea passed a resolution which aimed to turn all the private schools, then run by the French Catholic Church, into public schools. This is undoubtedly an important measure towards furthering national education, for most of the

private schools were previously attached to the French Catholic Church. If that continued, it would hinder the operation of the government policy for the development of national education. The autocratic French archbishop in Conakry, continuing to pursue an imperialist rôle, issued a statement condemning the resolution. The Guinean Government firmly rebuffed this imperialist interference and made him leave Guinea.

The new generation of the Guinean intellectuals will be nourished on their own mother's milk, grow up and reach maturity on the territory of their own motherland in accordance with the new principles of their Independence.

FORWARD, THE NEW-BORN REPUBLIC

The Guinean people are now energetically building their own motherland. During our visit we saw construction sites in Conakry and many other cities. Our hosts would apologize, saying, "Sorry we have to receive you at the construction site." We appreciated the significance of this type of greeting which reminded us of our own homeland, and would reply: "This shows precisely how Guinea is making progress. There are construction sites everywhere in our country too."

The Guinean Government, with the aid of socialist countries, is triumphantly carrying through its Three-Year Plan for the development of national economy, which was launched in July 1, 1960. Under this plan, Guinea is to have its own industrial and mining enterprises. More than thirty small and medium-sized mines and factories, including enterprises making farm tools, light machines, cement, bricks, tiles and cigarettes, gold and diamond mines, a sawmill, an oil refinery, a printing press and a film studio, will be built in Guinea. The aftermath of monoculture will be eliminated and self-sufficiency in food

crops achieved. Efforts are being made to increase the banana output of the Guinean-owned plantations so that it will surpass that of the French-controlled ones. A state-owned paddy-rice farm, covering seven thousand hectares of land, is planned and many agricultural co-ops are to be set up. Some new hospitals, schools and highways have already been constructed, many more are in the process of construction. Guinea's first industrial institute will come into being before the end of the Three-Year Plan.

Forward, Guinea! Fly, you Eagle of Africa!

THE IRRESISTIBLE TORRENT

A FERTILE LAND

The Mali people like to sing the praises of the luxuriant mountains and rivers of their motherland. "Please take a good look at the riches of Mali!" a friend in the Ministry of Economy said to us with pride.

Sweeping hundreds of kilometres northward, the Fouta Djalon Plateau of Guinea gradually slopes into the level ground of the Sudan plain. The Niger and the Senegal have their sources on this plateau, the former flowing northeastward and the latter northwestward, both through the heart of Mali. The valleys of these two rivers are fertile agricultural regions. The Niger in its upper reaches feeds the land from Bamako to Mopti where it is met by its tributary, the Bani. The Middle Niger curls into a wide bend, presenting a natural screen against the Sahara Desert of the Sudan plain. The Niger valley abounds in rice, cotton and fish. The district of Mopti covers 20,000 square kilometres, half of which is on the inland delta of the Niger. The land there is fertile and as there is plenty of water, the whole region is suitable for paddy-rice growing. There are also broad expanses of grasslands, good for cattle-raising. Mali produces over 180,000 tons of rice annually, the Mopti district contributing 50,000 tons. The fish in the Niger and the Bani are delicious and each year thousands of tons of fish are dried, smoked, and sold to Ghana and other neighbouring countries. The annual output of fish of Mali is 100,000

tons, an average of over 20 kilograms a head for its four million inhabitants. Proceeding westward from Bamako, along the valley of the Senegal, one reaches Kita, Bafoulabé and other millet-producing districts. The area south of Bamako and up to the border line with Guinea yields an abundance of peanuts.

The north of Mali is a desert which adjoins the Sahara. More than two-thirds of the country's cattle are bred on this land, herds of cows and sheep being removed to this part of the country during the wet seasons. They return home when the flood-waters have receded. These occasions are as joyful as festivals. The Mali people own an average of one cow, two sheep and three chickens per person.

Although the desert land is mostly barren, the sands conceal enormous riches. The local inhabitants mined salt in the desert long before the intrusion of the colonialists. Petrol has also been found there. To the west, there are rich reserves of diamonds and bauxite in the districts of Kayes and Kita. The gold-producing area on the Sudan plain extends from Bougouni south of Bamako to Kankan of Guinea.

THE MASTERS OF THE NIGER

The delta on the middle reaches of the Niger is an expanse of rich soil. A string of lakes stretches from the Debo Lake to Tombouctou. The French colonialists long aspired to exploit this area. They began prospecting and surveying the locality in 1919, and in 1924 set up temporary headquarters. In 1929 the Ministry of Colonies approved an ambitious plan which aimed to appropriate all the fertile land of this delta and plant 510,000 hectares with cotton and another 450,000 with rice. In 1932 the colonial institution, "Bureau du Niger", was formally established. It seized land estimated to cover an area

of hundreds of thousands of hectares, including 40,000 to 50,000 hectares of irrigated land.

We visited the Headquarters of the "Bureau du Niger" at Ségou and then proceeded along the River Niger to Markala, the machine-building centre administered by the "Bureau", and then to Niono, a rice-planting centre. We heard an arrogant Frenchman complaining: "The inhabitants are all working on our land and using our water."

Who after all are the real masters of the water of the Niger and the land on its banks, the colonialists or the local people?

We saw a medium-sized dam, a bridge spanning the river and several canals leading to the paddy and cotton fields at Sansanding in Markala. Were they the work of the French? No! Definitely no!

Trade union officers explained how the dam and bridge had been built. Soumaré Mamadou, the General Secretary of the Mali Trade Union of Building Workers, who accompanied us on our visit, had worked there as a carpenter in the thirties. Pointing to the bridge, he said, "The building of that bridge started in 1934 and did not end until after World War II. The colonialists used forced labour to get it built, and countless Mali people died building it." With a heavy heart, he described the following catastrophe: "In 1935, when the conscripted Mali workers were digging the base of the No. 1 pier of the bridge, a landslide occurred. More than a hundred workers were caught unawares and buried alive in the river bed. We never recovered their bodies. The accident also broke the arms and legs of many other workers." I later learned from the workers that many similar catastrophes occurred at the same place throughout the thirties. The French foremen lashed, bullied, and kicked the Mali workers, forcing them to labour under the scorching sun. A great number of them were drowned, or

died of overwork. Many suffered from illnesses and neglected injuries.

When the French colonialists first arrived, they adopted military reclamation methods and forcibly conscripted several thousands of Mali people into the army, submitting them to harsh military discipline. Mr. Emile Coulibaly, headmaster of a primary school in Bamako, who accompanied us, told us that in his childhood, the first canal was dug not far from Bamako under the orders of the French colonialists. Every morning he saw scores of dead Mali workers dragged out of the canal.

The dams and canals were built on the dead bodies of Mali workers who irrigated the banks of the Niger with their sweat and blood. Nevertheless the Mali people had no alternative but to lease land from the colonial company, the "Bureau du Niger", pay land and water rents as well as various other levies and taxes to the French. A commercial organization for the purchase of agricultural produce was attached to the "Bureau". Under the French colonial rule, the peasants were compelled to sell all their cotton and rice to the "Bureau" at a low price, in addition to the payment of rents and levies.

The colonial company grew richer and richer with each passing year by its enormous exploitation of the Mali people. Our Mali friends told us that the wealth of the "Bureau" was beyond estimation. It held more money than the Treasury of Mali.

During the course of our visit, we often heard the trade union officers and workers speak of this blood-sucking colonial company with great indignation. A young union functionary related: "Since independence, they (the French colonialists) have already sacked four hundred Mali workers." We asked: "On what ground have they done it?" He shrugged his shoulders, saying: "They say they are having a difficult time, but, they never dismiss their French employees." Then with

great confidence, he assured us: "It will not be long before the 'Bureau' will become our property. We are already training our own technicians so that we shall be able to replace the French personnel."

True enough, this French colonial institution of exploitation was nationalized by the Mali Government soon after our delegation had left the Republic.

THE RAILWAY TO THE GATE OF MALI

The trading route of Mali has been from north to south since ancient times. After invasion by the French colonialists, this traditional trade route was discarded and replaced by the Dakar-Niger Railway which runs from west to east.

In the 1850's, the French colonial troops in Senegal began to overrun the east and in 1880 they occupied the town of Kayes. The French colonialists were very anxious to further their eastward march, in order to conquer and exploit the Niger valley. Discussions started about the necessity for rail transport, and the construction of a strategic railway began in 1881, but the line from Kayes to Koulikoro via Bamako, a total of 555 kilometres, was not completed until 1904, twenty-three years later.

All through those twenty-three years, the African forced labourers sweated along every inch of the track. Every sleeper is stained with the blood and sweat of the oppressed toiling workers of Africa. In 1881 when the track from Kayes to Bafoulabé was being laid, some Chinese contract workers were also recruited by the French colonialists to work on this railway. Most of them were soon struck down by yellow fever and died, their end being hastened by the heavy labour and poor living conditions. The French colonialists subsequently press-

ganged Africans for labour, neither paying them wages nor supplying them with food. Many died from starvation, disease and overwork, or lost their lives under the constant lashings of the knotted whips wielded by the colonialists. Many ran away and were never heard of again. It is impossible to calculate how many African people sacrificed their lives in the twenty-three years of the construction of this railway line.

The railway was designed by the French colonialists solely for the purpose of exploiting the Niger valley. Later it became the medium through which the colonialists sucked out the blood of Mali, by grabbing all the agricultural produce of this area. With the completion of the line from Kayes to Thiès in Senegal in 1923, the 1,200-kilometre Dakar-Niger Railway went into service, and the Mali agricultural centres in the Niger valley were directly linked to the sea outlet at Dakar, Senegal. The Mali peasants produced peanuts and other food crops, which were transported by means of this railway to the port of Dakar for export. Through the same port consumer goods manufactured in France were dumped on the Mali markets. Mali became an economic dependency of the French colonial empire.

When Mali proclaimed its independence the French colonialists, by the use of intrigues, cut the railway line between Bamako and Dakar, hoping this would deprive Mali of the use of Senegal's sea outlet and consequently paralyze its economy. This was a dastardly measure, but the Mali people were determined not to succumb to the imperialist pressure. Mali's economy has not been paralyzed and its people are bravely surmounting one difficulty after another and building up an independent economy. Kayes, the gate of Mali, has been closed to the imperialists and is closely guarded by the Mali people, who will never allow them to re-enter. The Mali people will never allow the past to be repeated!

THE PEOPLE ARE MOBILIZED

When part of our delegation arrived in Kayes a mass rally attended by thousands of Mali people was in progress. It was a demonstration of the Mali people's determination to smash the imperialist blockade. Mayor Sidibé Mamadou, who visited China in 1956, made a report at the rally. After introducing the goodwill mission from the People's Republic of China, he stated:

"The Chinese delegates are present at our meeting today. They have come for the purpose of strengthening their friendship with our people. I have visited their country. In the past, China like our own country, suffered under the oppression and enslavement of the imperialists. Today, only eleven years after liberation, it is already manufacturing automobiles and aeroplanes. The Chinese people love their motherland and love to work for it. They set us a fine example. They are the valued friends of the Mali people."

The mayor asked everyone to help break the imperialist blockade, and called upon those who had money to contribute it and those who were strong to contribute their labour towards the building of a highway to Conakry, capital of the Republic of Guinea. The distance between Kayes and Conakry is a little over 400 kilometres. The completion of this road will provide a new outlet to the sea and further strengthen the economic ties between Mali and her neighbour Guinea. "Mali is now in difficult circumstances," said the mayor. "The imperialists are constantly trying to create new difficulties for us and watching for opportunities to suppress our independent Republic. We must sharpen our vigilance and safeguard our motherland. . . ." The members of the audience were very

agitated, and a young man jumped to his feet, declaring, "The imperialists are trying to strangle us, but they will never succeed. We must rely on ourselves." Many young men and women, students, labourers, owners of transport agencies, members of the parliament and local inhabitants took the floor to speak. Some pledged themselves to provide money and materials, others guaranteed to contribute their labour. They swore to thwart the imperialists' scheme and to build the road whatever the cost.

IT'S USELESS TO TRY TO HOLD ON

Mali and Algeria have a common border line of some 2,000 kilometres. Until recently the French colonialists had strongly-manned military bases in Mali. Their presence was a threat both to the national liberation movement of Algeria and to the Republic of Mali. Before Mali won its independence, France held eight army and air bases in Bamako, Kati, Mopti, Nioro, Sikasso, Gao, Ségou and Tessalit. After Mali's independence, the French were compelled to evacuate four of these bases, but retained Bamako, Kati, Gao and Tessalit. When we were in Ségou, the French flags had been hauled down and we saw the Mali flag floating above the barracks. A battalion of French colonial troops had been withdrawn from Ségou, but the French were trying to hold on to other bases. The Mali people, however, would not tolerate this state of affairs, and justly held that the presence of one single colonial soldier on their independent land was a disgrace to the Mali people. The Mali Government issued a solemn statement in January 1961, demanding that the French troops clear out of Mali. The communique, which was issued by the Mali Information Service,

pointed out that the Mali Government's demand for the withdrawal of the colonial troops from the territory of the ex-colony was fully supported by all the Mali people.

What were the French reactions? In March, while we were still in Mali, some French trucks loaded with men and equipment drove away from Kati and Gao, pretending that they were departing. But the French did not actually evacuate these two bases until it was impossible for them to hold on any longer, and did not get out until months later. If they had only moved out at the rate of ten soldiers a day, it would not have taken them nearly six months, from March to August, to withdraw all the soldiers from the two bases. They had obviously been stalling for time, and eventually had no alternative but got out. After seventy-eight years of occupation, the French imperialists, under pressure from the Mali people, finally evacuated their last soldier from Mali territory on September 5, 1961. The Mali people were jubilant, and celebrated the strengthening of the independence of their motherland.

The Mali people are vigilantly on guard against any scheming on the part of either the old or the new colonialists. In the capital Bamako, in Koulikoro, and in Kayes, the young men and women of Mali diligently undergo training. Rifle in hand, they are ready to answer the sacred call of their motherland at any moment. Mali is the living demonstration of the fact that no force on earth can resist the torrent of the national liberation movement in Africa.

FROM DARK NIGHT TO GLORIOUS DAWN

THE ORDEAL

In the latter half of the 15th century, the Western colonialists descended on the land of Ghana and turned it into a centre for the exploitation of the country's gold and ivory and for the infamous traffic in its people in the slave markets. A long nightmare existence began for its people.

From Accra, Winneba and Cape Coast to Sekondi, and all along Ghana's sea coast, are many forts built by the Western colonialists, between the 15th and 18th centuries, to serve their traffic in human beings. We visited a fort at Cape Coast, which Dutchmen and Englishmen once used as a black slave transport centre. It is now a place of great historic significance to foreign visitors, a hotel and a post office have been set up there, for their convenience.

Beneath the fort huge billows dash and roar like countless wild beasts attempting to swallow the rocks. There are sixteen cannons on its flat roof, all pointing towards the sea. The rooms on the top floor were the residence of the former colonial governor, close by is the office formerly used by his administrative staff. Below the ground floor is a dungeon which was used as a lock-up for slaves. A heavy, wooden, cobwebbed gate was opened, and a flock of bats flashed out of their hiding places in fright, and then plunged into the deeper darkness ahead. Outside the day was gloomy and sombre, and rain was falling steadily. As we groped our way into the dark, foul

dungeon, an African, lamp in hand, acted as our guide. The lamp shimmered in the darkness, as with bated breath, we descended into the dungeon which was scores of metres deep. The cells were partitioned by thick walls, and each cell had a floor space of less than ten square metres. Dozens of slaves used to be crammed into each one of them. The cells were dark and musty, and pierced by a feeble light from small openings in the wall. The wooden piles to which the slaves were chained have rotted away, but depressions in the stone floor indicate where they formerly stood. The Ghanaian guide described how the slaves were herded into these cells. He told us how they were tortured by thirst and hunger, and of their piteous cries for food and water. Many died before they could be shipped away. Those who survived were hustled through a door, now blocked, into canoes which were waiting to ferry them to the slave ships anchored out at sea. The canoes were often overloaded and many were overturned by the waves and their human cargoes perished.

We visited another fort, Elmina, the first to be built on the Gold Coast. It was erected by the Portuguese colonialists in 1432. It is surrounded by a moat, the only means of access being a draw-bridge situated in front of the main gate. In the dungeon of this fort, we saw the actual iron chains and hooks that were used to fetter and lock up the slaves. There were both big and small cells. The big ones were for the women and the men were placed in the small cells as a precaution against riots. We also saw a courtyard where slaves were assembled before being sent to the cells. A stairway leads upwards from it to the dwelling quarters of the colonial officers. According to the men now looking after the fort, rebellions were by no means infrequent, and the colonialists resorted to the use of tunnels to escape the just wrath of their victims. A cell known as the "Room of Prempeh" was formerly occupied by

Prempeh, Chief of the Ashantis. He was imprisoned there after his defeat by the British aggressors in 1896. He was later exiled to the Seychelles Island where he died.

As I now write about my recollections of the forts of the Gold Coast, a horrible picture unfolds before my eyes: Amidst the angry roars of the billows, the protesting slaves, dragging heavy fetters, are brutally driven to the ships by the emissaries of the "Western civilization". Then they are transported like cattle to the other side of the ocean. Africa lost more than a hundred million of her sons and daughters during the three hundred years of the slave trade conducted by the Western slave-hunters. This tremendous loss of man-power seriously affected African productive forces and held back the social and cultural progress of the continent. All the water in the Atlantic Ocean cannot cleanse the Western colonialists of the numberless crimes they committed along the Western African coast.

THE GOLDEN STOOL

The colonialists' boast of "peaceful conquest" will never cover up their bloody records. A government official at the Provincial Governor's residence in Cape Coast told us something of the struggles against the colonialists carried out by the tribes living in the seaboard areas. Towards the end of the 19th century the Fanti tribe fought many times against British annexation, and eventually succeeded in preventing the colonialists' seizure of their land. The Ashanti people of central Ghana were likewise dauntless in their struggle against the aggressors.

In the years between 1807 and 1901 they waged eight wars of resistance against Britain. The British colonialists attacked the Ashantis from the seaboard four times between 1807 and 1824, and each attack was rebuffed. A fifth attack which

lasted from 1853 to 1863 met with the same result, and although the Ashantis suffered defeat in 1896, they were never conquered. An eighth war broke out in 1900 when the British governor F. Hodgson demanded that the Ashantis surrender their national symbol, the Golden Stool. The Ashanti people retaliated by besieging the British colonial troops in Kumasi, a well-known city in central Ghana. The siege lasted several months and was only relieved when the British colonialists managed to bring up reinforcements from the coast. In the following year Britain occupied Ashanti and the Northern Territories but still failed to obtain the Golden Stool, which had been hidden by the patriotic Ashanti people. A workman digging up a road discovered it by chance in 1921, and the British colonial authorities were immediately warned by the Ashantis that if they took away the Golden Stool there would be war. The British colonialists were forced to agree not to lay their hands on it.

The story of the Golden Stool is famous. In the courtyard of the Kumasi Hospital, there is an old decayed tree about a hundred metres high. It is hung with creepers, and with its bent trunk it somewhat resembles an old woman, recounting a story. Legend says that the site of the tree marks the place where the Golden Stool descended from the sky to the Ashantis. A legend is but a legend, but this lively story told by the people shows their immense love for their traditional treasure.

ARCH OF INDEPENDENCE

The Ghanaian people's earlier struggles against British colonialists were followed at first by spontaneous and later organized political struggle. The peasants struggled against the monopoly purchase of cocoa during the 1930s. An employee

of an experimental station at Kumasi told us that the British colonial companies had the sole right to purchase Ghana's cocoa. They would go to the countryside, visit any peasant, tell him what price they were prepared to pay for his cocoa and practically compell him to sell it. At first they paid one pound, that is, twenty shillings for each bag of cocoa, later they reduced the price to four shillings, one-fifth of a pound, and even to two and six, an eighth of a pound. This was sheer compulsion and robbery and could not possibly be called fair trade. The Ghanaian cocoa-growers had no alternative but to rise and fight for their existence.

There was an upsurge in the national independence movement in Ghana after World War II. Kwame Nkrumah returned from abroad in 1947 to lead his people in struggle. The Convention People's Party was founded. In 1948 the wrath of the Ghanaian people expressed itself in a widespread movement to boycott British goods. The ex-servicemen in Ghana staged a big demonstration against Britain on February 28. The workers' movement in Ghana grew vigorously during these years, and became an important part of the national independence movement. The number of actual workers engaged in production increased very rapidly. In the pre-war period, there were only about 100,000 workers, but by 1953, there were more than 220,000. Ghana has now 350,000 workers. The workers' movement reached a high pitch in the period between the latter half of 1949 and the first half of 1950. There were fifty-four fairly large strikes in various parts of the country, involving some 40,000 people, in less than one year. On January 7, 1950, there was a nation-wide general strike in response to a call from Dr. Nkrumah and the Convention People's Party for "Positive Action". It was ruthlessly suppressed by the colonial authorities, but it dealt a heavy blow at the colonialists in Ghana. The surging tide of the national

independence movement compelled the British colonialists to amend the "constitution" four times after the war and Ghana passed from "semi-self-government" to "self-government" and finally became the independent republic of today.

"Freedom and Justice" are the words inscribed on the imposing Arch of Independence which lies across the February 28 Road in Accra. Our two chauffeurs in Ghana, who were ex-servicemen and participants in the February 28 demonstration, described the events of that day. Several hundred ex-servicemen demonstrated to demand that the British colonial authorities honour the promises they had given to the Ghanaian soldiers during the war. When the procession arrived at the cross-roads near the present Parliament House, the repressive forces organized by the colonial authorities were waiting to attack it. Troops and police opened fire on the defenceless, peaceful demonstrators and many were killed and wounded. The anger of the whole nation was aroused. Workers, students and shop assistants united in a big demonstration of protest, and British shops were wrecked. The people of Accra and other major cities joined the bitter protest against the crimes of British imperialism. The Ghanaian people will never forget that bloody day and the bloody record of the imperialists. The imposing Arch of Independence stands as a symbol of the solidarity and fighting spirit of the Ghanaian people.

MR. SALOWAY MISCALCULATED

The people are always the decisive factor, victory lies in their hands. In his autobiography, President Nkrumah records a significant little episode. A British colonial official R.H. Saloway sent for him in 1949 and told him:

"Mark my words, my good man, within three days the people here will let you down – they'll never stick it."

History has proved the British colonialists to be wrong in their estimates of the will and strength of the people of Ghana. The Ghanaian people not only stuck to their demand for self-government but went further and demanded independence. They stuck it out not for three days but to the end. Having won their independence they are now waging a new fight for a better tomorrow for their motherland.

MAY GHANA'S TOMORROW BE AS BRILLIANT AS GOLD

A COUNTRY OF GOLD

When the name of Ghana is mentioned, one naturally links it with gold, the valuable and scarce mineral. Ever since the Western colonialists discovered this land in the latter half of the 15th century, its gold has been the magnet which has attracted them. "Gold Coast" was the name given to it by the colonialists. At that time, gold had taken on a new importance and was no longer used only for decorative purposes. It had become a means of exchange for the payment of goods and was being used as loans and savings in Europe. A European who visited Ghana in 1462, was amazed to see the valuable gold necklaces being worn by the king and nobles. Their heads and even their beards were adorned with gold ornaments of every description. The colonialists who followed him found the inhabitants of the coastal regions, Elmina and Axim, digging gold in the valleys and rivers, and saw women with sieves panning gold in the streams after heavy rains. At the close of the 19th century, when the bloody business of slave trade had ended, the annexing and exploitation of the gold mines became their objective. Ghana's annual gold output was 7,700 ounces in 1880. It has now reached something near 900,000 ounces a year.

Ghana's present-day gold-producing area is enclosed within a circle with a radius of 150 kilometres, centred on Dunkwa

and between Takoradi in the coastal region, and Kumasi in the north. The estimated reserves of gold deposits in this area amount to two million tons. We visited a big gold mine at Obuasi, seventy-five kilometres south of Kumasi. It is an old mine which began production early in 1897 and is owned by the Ashanti Goldfields Corporation of London. It has now more than 5,000 workers and staff. Known as the "richest square mile in Africa", it is the key mine of the corporation and is said to be recovering more than one ounce of gold from every ton of ore dug from the earth.

The gold mines in Ghana are almost entirely under the control of eight British companies. On January 23, 1961, the president of the Amalgamated Banket Areas Ltd. declared that his company would close down three gold mines so that it could concentrate upon the more profitable ones. He announced that more than a thousand African workers would be discharged as a result. The next day he took action and under the pretext of lack of adequate funds, he notified the company's shareholders that the machinery, tools, and other equipment in these three mines were to be removed and that the mines would be flooded. Such action would be a serious threat to Ghana's economy, and throw thousands of workers out of work. Valuable mining resources would also be lost to the Ghanaian people. The Ghana Government backed by its people, strongly opposed this proposal, and an act was passed forbidding foreign mine owners to relax, without government permission, safety measures in the pits, or to cause or wilfully allow them to be flooded.

THE GREEN GOLD

Cocoa, known as green gold, occupies an exceedingly important place in Ghana's economy. Cocoa exports amount to

about sixty per cent of the annual gross value of Ghana's exports. About half of the population depend upon the cocoa crop for a living.

The cocoa tree is said to have been imported into the country by a Ghanaian blacksmith, in 1879 from the small island of Fernando Poo, a Spanish colony adjacent to Nigeria. It is now cultivated over Ghana's central, southern, western and eastern regions. About 400 million cocoa trees are growing on 160,000 square kilometres of fertile land. The Ghanaian peasants have worked very hard over the last sixty years in the planting and cultivating of these trees. All the cocoa beans are exported to Europe and America. Cocoa powder labelled "Made in England" is on sale on the Ghanaian markets. Have no illusion, it is not made from British beans but from beans grown in Ghana. The Ghanaian people often angrily protest against this: "We produce enormous amount of cocoa and have to sell it to the British market at a very low price. Just think, when we want chocolate bars and cocoa powder we have to import them again, at a very high price, from England." The British colonialists have done everything in their power to grab Ghana's cocoa crop. Profits from this trade, amounting to hundreds of millions of pounds, are deposited in the banks of London. The profiteers have always been opposed to the establishment of a cocoa factory in Ghana. Ghanaian friends told us that, during World War II, the colonialists set up a factory not far from Accra to produce cocoa butter to satisfy their own needs. Three months after the war ended, it closed down and has never been reopened. Consequently, Ghana can only supply raw material to the cocoa industry in Europe and America and cannot manufacture cocoa products for its own consumption.

FROM A SERIOUS EPIDEMIC TO A BUMPER HARVEST

Ghana's cocoa trees were widely afflicted by a disease, called swollen shoot, shortly after World War II. An insect known as the mealy-bug threatened the life of the cocoa trees, and presented a serious danger to the entire cocoa crop in Ghana. All the infected trees had to be felled and burned to stop the spread of the disease. Ghana's cocoa production suffered a severe calamity because of the combined effects of the infection and exploitation by British monopoly capital. The annual output dropped to about 300,000 tons. After Ghana achieved independence, the government adopted certain measures to deal effectively with insect pests and plant diseases and introduced new strains of cocoa trees. As a result, the output of cocoa rose to 320,000 tons in the year 1959-60. The weather in 1960-61 was favourable and Ghana reaped an exceptional bumper harvest of 440,000 tons.

It was certainly a good thing for Ghana to have a boom year, but the increased yield brought a new problem. Since independence the right to purchase cocoa has been taken out of the hands of the colonialists but the price of cocoa is still controlled on the international market by the imperialists. As a result of British colonial rule, Ghana is a country of monoculture mainly dependent on this one product, and its whole economy is directly affected by a drop in the price of cocoa on the international market.

During our stay in Ghana, the people talked a great deal about the cocoa problem. The price had been 500 pounds sterling per ton in 1953-54. It dropped to 316 pounds in 1958 and then fell precipitously to 160 pounds at the time of our visit. The Ghanaian people were very worried.

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations was at that time holding a "cocoa conference" on the Legon Hill near Accra, but the Ghanaian people showed no interest in it. The *Ghana Times* editorial stated that if people expected that the participants of the conference would ever agree to a fixed international price for cocoa advantageous to the growers, they were overlooking the important fact that the economic system of the West is monopoly-capitalism, that water and fire don't mix, and that it is an iron law of imperialism to buy low and sell high!

The Ghanaian friends told us that they were very much worried over the continual fall in the price of cocoa. It was time, they said, to effect a thorough change in this state of affairs. It was necessary to adopt measures to ensure that Ghana's agricultural produce was available to serve the needs of its own national industry as well as for export purposes.

The first results of the efforts of the Ghana Government and its people to change monoculture into multiple-culture since independence are already showing. Ghana's poultry-breeding, and vegetable, rice, rubber, tobacco, banana and coffee production have made progress during recent years.

GHANA IN RECONSTRUCTION

Ghana is a country richly endowed by nature. It has a territory of over 239,000 square kilometres and a population of nearly seven million hard-working, intelligent people. Ghana is second only to South Africa among the gold-producing countries of Africa, and ranks fourth in the world. It provides more than one-third of the world's cocoa. It is the world's third largest source of diamonds and Africa's second largest producer of manganese. It has huge quantities of bauxite,

and in its central area there are enormous, dense forests. The River Volta has a rich hydraulic power potential. Northern Ghana grows wheat and maize and breeds cattle. Much of its land has not yet been brought under cultivation. From Accra to the hinterland the high green grass spreads as far as the eye can see on both sides of the road. What boundless fields indeed! Now that Ghana is independent, it will fully develop its national economy. President Nkrumah said on the eve of independence that it must be realized that Ghana has material basis for her independence, and that she can stand on her own.

Ghana is in the process of construction. In the capital, Accra, one new building after another has been erected since independence. Here are the Trade Union House and the Peasants' Association House and there are the Bank of Ghana and the Ambassador Hotel. The University College of Ghana on the Legon Hill is being expanded and educational reform is under way. The first batch of industrial enterprises to be run by Ghana, the match, cement and nail factories, a water works, a thermal-power station, a brewery, and other factories, have already been erected. We saw wine being produced in the brewery and nails in the nail factories. The Ghana Government has planned to build a hydro-electric station on the Volta and an aluminium plant in the rich bauxite region. At the time of our visit, the new port at Tema, near Accra, was nearing completion. We saw a British ship in the port loading cocoa, another foreign ship was unloading cement. The port, when completed, will be able to accommodate a dozen or more 10,000-ton ships. The Ghana Government has declared that it will be a free port for all African countries.

Ghana, you are a country of gold! Your people should never have been poverty-stricken. You have won your independence. We hope your tomorrow will be as brilliant as your gold.

IMPRESSIONS OF NIGER

A LAND OF ABUNDANCE

The country of Niger got its name from River Niger, the main waterway in West Africa. This great river irrigates large stretches of land and nurtures the people living on its banks. It cuts across the western tip of Niger for a distance of 600 kilometres. Niamey, the capital of this country, is situated right on the middle of this section of the river.

Niger is a big country, the sixth largest in Africa. It has a territory of 1,279,000 square kilometres, with less than three people to each square kilometre. The country is chiefly inhabited by the Songhais, Djermas, Haussas and Kanuris, most of whom have now settled down to farming. The Touaregs and other northerners are nomads. It is a rich agricultural country, the grain production being sufficient to meet the needs of its own people. Its animal husbandry is flourishing and includes three million oxen, seven million sheep and goats, 100,000 horses and 300,000 camels, an average of about four cattle per head of the population. The mining deposits were never previously surveyed and prospected. A large iron-ore deposit has recently been discovered in the vicinity of Niamey. Niger already yields tin and tungsten, and it is believed that there is oil around Agadès near the centre of the country.

Niger has most favourable natural conditions. A Nigerian once told me, "When the day comes that the waters of the Niger are completely at our disposal and the water conservancy and

irrigation problem is settled, the banks of the Niger will be covered with paddy-rice fields and fruit orchards."

SIGHTSEEING IN NIAMEY

Niamey has a population of about 40,000. It is not a large city. Formerly a commercial centre for the collection and distribution of goods, it was made the capital of the French colony in 1926. Zinder in the east, the second largest city of Niger, was for a long time the centre of colonial rule, following the French occupation in 1897.

Niamey has few asphalt roads. One of them leads to the airport, most of the others are dirt tracks. There are few modern buildings, the majority of the buildings being just mud cottages. The Presidential Residence for the Republic of Niger, the former residence of the French governor, is situated inside a large enclosure near the Parliament building. New buildings are being erected to house the government departments.

There is a state hospital and several state clinics in Niamey. There is also a fairly large hospital, which was originally a French military hospital. I was told that French soldiers, engaged in the invasion of Algeria, were often sent to this hospital for treatment. I met some of its French doctors and found them as haughty as ever. One of them said to me, "This is not the Niger Government's hospital. It is a hospital entrusted to us Frenchmen by the United Nations." Thus after Niger has proclaimed its independence, this French military hospital has become an institution manned by French doctors under the control of the United Nations!

There are two African market places in the capital, known as the Upper and Lower Markets. The Lower Market will soon be sited among the new houses which have been built near

it. The Upper Market, capable of accommodating 1,000 customers at once, is like an exhibition of home-grown produce. Its stalls display millet, corn, soya beans, onions, dates, tomatoes, peppers, taros, cola-nuts, salt, river fish, shrimps, and other produce. There are also all kinds of handicraft articles on sale, such as decorated pottery and mats, and hoes, spades or other simple metal farming tools.

Some stalls displayed various medicines and drugs made from herbs, and bones of birds and animals. At first glance, I thought they were Chinese medicines. The Niger official, who was accompanying me, noticed that I was curious and explained: "These are traditional African medicines. People go to native doctors when they are ill, especially in the countryside. Some native medicines are highly effective. Western medicine has no remedy for snake poisoning, but one dose of native medicine can cure it. The native doctors can set a broken bone almost painlessly and without the use of anaesthetics." African native medicines and native doctors, like the traditional Chinese herbal medicines and the doctors trained in their use, are all part of the traditional cultural legacy of the African people.

AN INCIDENT ON MAY DAY

We spent two festivals in Niamey, May Day and the "May Fourth" Chinese Youth Festival. At eight o'clock on May Day morning, we were roused from a quiet chat by the beating of tam-tams, and went to the balcony to see what was happening. In the street below about five hundred demonstrators were carrying large placards as they marched. There was a great hubbub, many people having assembled to watch them.

I went into the street, and at the gate of the office of the Union National des Travailleurs du Niger, encountered some trade union officials who had just taken part in the demonstration. They greeted me and invited me to look at the placards. They were painted in glaring colours, the slogans being: "French soldiers, go home!" "Abolish the French military bases!" "Let all government employees be Africans! Replace foreign general office chiefs and technical advisers with Africans!" "Replace the French army doctors with civilian doctors!" "Raise the minimum wage immediately!" "Carry out the labour statute!" . . .

On May 4th, I was strolling in the street and saw about fifty local youths being escorted by armed police. I asked a passer-by what was happening and was told, "They are the students of the Niamey Secondary School, who have been arrested for creating a disturbance."

We had visited the school two days previously, and had been shown around by the French headmaster. A native friend afterwards told me that the school had twenty-five teachers, two of them were Africans, the rest being Frenchmen. Only eight of the French teachers were qualified to teach secondary schools. Once a French teacher gave a wrong answer to a common knowledge question in class. A student challenged him and quoted various references which proved that the teacher had not given the correct information. The Frenchman was embarrassed and lost his temper, and instead of admitting his mistake, reprimanded the student for contradicting him. The students protested and hence the "disturbance" and the arrests.

I subsequently learned that the school authorities called a meeting to discuss the incident. Some of the French teachers held that it was against all the rules of good behaviour for a student to contradict his teacher, others said the student was not to blame and that the teacher should not have made the

mistake. It was finally decided that the matter be closed with an apology from the student in spite of a demand that the student should be expelled. The students, however, insisted that the teacher, and not the student, should make the apology, and as the last resort, the police had been called in.

THE BLOODY DEBTS OF THE FRENCH COLONIAL FORCES

The development of capitalism in Europe led to the penetration of the European colonialists into the hinterland of West Africa, towards the end of the 18th century. The Niger valley henceforth became a region of great attraction to them. In those days, no European had yet reached the famous cities of Gao and Kano. There were many rumours about the exact course of the mighty River Niger. European colonialists did not discover its sea outlet until 1830.

In the 19th century a fierce struggle began, between Britain and France, for the possession of colonies in the hinterland of West Africa. The conflicts between the colonialists grew more and more acute as their dirty business of partitioning Africa neared its end, towards the close of the century. Britain and France signed two agreements, one in 1890 and the other in 1898, defining their respective spheres of influence, and declaring the territory north of Nigeria a colony of France. French influence began to penetrate into the territory of Niger in 1897 and converted it into France's last colony in the West African hinterland.

Three French missions started out to look for Lake Chad in 1899, one from southern Algeria, one from the Congo and the other from French Sudan. These missions were really the vanguard of the French military occupation. The mission from

French Sudan consisted of French officers, Captains Voulet and Chanoine and Lieutenants Joalland and Meynier. They recruited a band of mercenaries from among the Bambaras of Sudan and conscripted the Mossi of Upper Volta as carriers. When they got as far as Say, the colonialists marooned the carriers on a small island on the Niger to "prevent them from escaping". The French massacred the people as they passed through the villages. A member of the mission later stated:

"The patrols had to force their way into the villages and only occupied them after hand-to-hand fighting. All who dared to resist were put to death. . . . Twenty mothers with their babies and sucklings were, on Captain Voulet's order, bayonetted within a few hundred of metres from our tents, as a warning to others."

The French colonial officers told the soldiers that they would be awarded prizes for killing Africans, provided that they brought in the hands of their victims as proof of their death.

Another record, made at that time, reveals the barbarous acts of the French colonial officers in Niger:

"Large areas were devastated. All kinds of articles were strewn about in the wild grass and scattered along the small path. . . . The villages were all burned to the ground. There were corpses everywhere. . . ."

The French mission killed, burned and raped its way into Niger. When it reached Nguigmi on the eastern border of Niger October 23, 1899, it joined forces with the other missions.

In 1900, the French colonialists succeeded in establishing a sphere of influence around Lake Chad. In the following year, the "Military Territory of Niger" was established. In 1904, French military forces occupied Agadès. Another two years went by and they were able to join forces with the French colonial troops marching south from the oases of the Sahara, and thus completed the annexation of northern Niger. The

"Military Territory" was at first attached to a larger French colonial unit in West Africa, named the Haut Sénégal-Niger. In 1922 Niger was formally declared a French colony.

The conquest of Niger by the French colonialists was by no means plain sailing, as was shown by the course of events that took place between 1897 and 1922.

A heroic struggle against the French invaders was waged by the Touaregs, Ajjers and other Arab tribesmen in eastern Niger. The Djermas, living south of Dosso in western Niger, resisted the French by the use of arms in 1905.

The most famous uprising in the history of the struggle of the people of Niger against the French colonialists was the Kaossen Uprising. In December 1916, the Touareg chief, Kaossen, led a thousand soldiers in an attack on Zinder, the noted historical city of Niger. The neighbouring tribes were drawn into action and the war spread as far as Nigeria, violently shaking the British and French colonial rule in West Africa. The uprising marked a glorious chapter in the history of Niger.

THE SINISTER RECORD OF SIXTY YEARS' COLONIAL RULE

In the sixty odd years between 1897, when Niger began to be dominated by the French colonialists, and 1960, the year of its independence, the French relied on the chief-system as the main prop for their colonial rule over Niger's countryside and nomad regions. In 1939 there were three supreme chiefs, five big tribal chiefs, 183 smaller tribal and canton chiefs and 6,585 village chiefs in Niger. They all acted as tax collectors for France. The tax on cattle in the pastoral areas amounted to 800 million West African francs a year. The poll tax on every inhabitant above fourteen years of age was 685 West

African francs a year, representing one-sixth of the annual income of an able-bodied peasant. The French colonialists severely and cruelly exploited the Senegalese people. One of their forms of exploitation was forced labour, the peasants being compelled to work for one to three months every year without wages. There was also compulsory military service, and during the two world wars, the youths of Niger were rounded up and pressganged into the French armed service. Many of them lost their lives while defending the interests of the French colonialists. The French colonial authorities erected a memorial in Niamey for what was termed the commemoration of those who were killed in the two world wars. The people of Niger said that although the world wars never spread to Niger, a great number of her people sacrificed their lives during these wars. The colonialists never published their names and the number of them. The French government also conscripted the people of Niger and other West African colonies to serve the French interests in the dirty aggressive war against Algeria, this time to kill their own Algerian brothers.

The French colonialists set up an organization in the countryside known as "Sociétés Indigènes de Prévoyance". It was described as a "co-operative"! Nominally it aimed at accumulating reserves of grain to be used in years of poor harvests; in practice, it plundered the peasants. Membership was compulsory, and the peasants had to make yearly contribution in the form of grain. The colonialists and their lackeys were the only ones who really benefited by the scheme. The peasants got nothing from this organization and thoroughly hated it.

One of the means used by the French colonialists to exploit the peasants was to purchase farm produce and grow crops at low prices. The monopoly purchase price of harvested peanuts, the main crop of the agricultural regions, was pitiably low. To ensure greater profits, the peasants were compelled to sell the

growing crops at half of the harvested price. France dumped its industrial products on Niger's markets, and flooded the country's cities and countryside with luxury as well as necessary consumer goods.

The imperialists often bragged that it was their "mission" to "raise" the standard of living of the people of the African countries and to help them "develop" their economy. Facts have given the lie to this boast. Sixty years is not a short lapse of time, but during the whole of that period the French colonialists neither laid one metre of railway nor set up one single large-scale mining or industrial enterprise in spite of all the riches they plundered from Niger year after year. Every nail and every inch of wire had to be bought and imported from France, and Niger still struggles to shake itself free from the aftermath of this impoverishing colonial rule.

Niger's position in regard to schools is typical of the situation in former French Black Africa. In the long years of French colonial rule, the people had no opportunities for education. The French tried to keep the people ignorant, so that their domination would be easier. That was why 99 per cent of the people of Niger were illiterate when the Niger Government was set up.

The first primary school in the country was established in 1921, twenty-four years after France intruded. It was exclusively for the use of the children of the tribal chiefs, certain of whom had fiercely resisted French aggression. The colonialists aimed by the opening of this school to foster obedient successors to the chiefs, and to hold their children as hostages. The chiefs, with their children in the grip of the school, would not venture to offer resistance, for fear that punishment might fall upon their children. When we were in Mali we heard about the existence of such schools. The French colonialists set up a similar school in Kayes in 1923. This was one of the

dirty tricks used by them to try and subdue the West African chiefs.

Fifty years after France's intrusion into Niger, there were still only 4,500 children attending primary schools throughout the whole of the country. That is to say, there was only one primary school student for every six hundred people, and only one out of every eighty school-age children went to school. Since independence, the number of pupils in the primary schools has increased to 25,000, 6 per cent of the total number of school-age children. The distribution of the pupils is still very uneven, as is shown by the fact that the children of Niamey comprise 16 per cent of those attending primary school. There are only 1,100 middle school students in Niger, and her sixty university students are studying abroad. In 1961, there were only six Nigerian university graduates working in Niger. Two of them were the only Nigerian doctors working in the country, two were the only Nigerian teachers in the Niamey Secondary School, one was a pharmacist and the other one was a senior official in the Foreign Ministry.

We visited a small radio station which had a 4-kilowatt transmitter in Niamey. It was built in 1956. At the time of our visit, a Frenchman was in charge of it. Its international news is limited to reports supplied by L'Agence France-Presse. There is no printing house, nor printed newspaper in the country. The mimeographed tabloid-sized paper *Niger Times* is in the nature of a government bulletin, and has been in circulation since 1960. All the editorial staff are Frenchmen, with the exception of one editor who is from Niger. The circulation is six hundred copies.

This is a brief record of the sixty odd years' French colonial rule in Niger. It shows the state of the country when the people took over from the French colonialists and reveals that the people of Niger have to start from the bottom to build.

A VISIT TO UPPER VOLTA

The flag of the newly independent country, Upper Volta, was raised in the hinterland of West Africa in 1960. During the previous sixty years when it was a French colony, its people suffered deeply under their oppressive colonial rule.

Friends from Upper Volta came to visit China soon after the proclamation of the People's Republic of China in 1949. Madame Ouezzin Coulibaly, the only woman member of the present Upper Volta parliament, also visited China in 1951. The first Chinese delegation to visit Upper Volta was that of the Chinese-African People's Friendship Association. This event marked a new chapter in the history of the friendly relations between the two countries.

THE RISE AND FALL OF THE MOSSI KINGDOM

Long before the incursions of the French colonialists, many states already existed in Upper Volta. They were mostly inhabited by the Mossi, one of the principal tribes of West Africa. These states formed a federation grouped around a central kingdom, at the head of which was a supreme chief, the "Moro[1] Naba". His palace can still be seen in the capital, Ouagadougou. The Mossi had established a strict political and military system long before, and were far more advanced socially than their neighbouring tribes, such as the Gourounsis

[1] Moro is the singular form of Mossi.

and the Lobis, who all speak the same language as the Mossi. The Mossi were a brave and diligent people, cultivated the fields, and fought valiantly when necessary. The Moro Naba reigned with absolute power, and, if an emergency arose, could speedily mobilize a large disciplined army.

After French colonialists had occupied Senegal and Sudan, in 1896 they extended their aggressive tentacles to the hinterland of West Africa. A detachment of the French invading army was despatched to the territory of the Mossi. The Mossi twice successfully resisted the invasion at Ouagadougou, but were subsequently overcome. The whole country rose in revolt in 1897, but the French "expeditionary army" ruthlessly suppressed the uprising and the streets of Yatenga were red with the blood of the slaughtered Mossi. Resistance to the invaders continued until 1899. After Upper Volta was occupied by the French, the Ivory Coast and the upper and middle reaches of the Niger River fell one after another into the hands of the colonialists.

Upper Volta was not a separate colony at first, but was administered as a part of the French Ivory Coast for a number of years. In 1916 a large-scale armed uprising against French colonialists broke out in Niger and in the eastern part of French West Africa. The colonialists, alarmed by the uprising, took measures to tighten their control in Upper Volta. A permanent military command was set up to direct the whole of the colonial troops stationed throughout the region, and in 1919 Upper Volta was made a separate colony. This measure was strongly opposed by the colonial managers of the mines, plantations and forest concessions in the Ivory Coast, as it made it difficult for them to directly extort cheap labour from the Moro people. The great drainage of man-power and the misrule of the colonialists created financial crisis in Upper Volta in 1930. As a result, Upper Volta was split into three parts

in 1932. One part was included in the Ivory Coast, and the other two were attached to Niger and Sudan (present Mali) respectively. In September 1947, the French colonialists again made Upper Volta a separate colony.

Many of the borders between the West African countries were artificially set up as a result of dishonourable bargaining among the Western colonialists when they dismembered the colonies. This dismemberment split up unified nations and impeded the social and economic development of the West African peoples.

DISASTROUS EXPLOITATION OF LABOUR FORCE

A system of forced labour was imposed on the people of West Africa, particularly on those living in the French Sudan and Upper Volta. According to official statistics, in 1936 the French colonialists extracted more than 25 million man-days of work through forced labour from this part of Africa. In the ten years from 1920 to 1930, 190,000 Upper Voltaic people, representing one-eighth of the total labour force of the country at that time, were forced to toil in foreign lands.

The most common form of forced labour was the pre-contract system. This scheme was virtually a copy of the "Negro-hunting" which was prevalent between the 15th and 18th centuries. Western firms sent out their agents to "recruit" Africans, who were denied the right to leave their masters before their contracts expired. If the Africans tried to break the contract they would be imprisoned. The Upper Voltaic labourers conscripted to the Ivory Coast led an extremely miserable life. The pension paid to the dependants of a deceased contract labourer in 1942 was one-tenth of the market price of an ox.

The plantations of the Ivory Coast flourished, thanks to the labour power from Upper Volta. But this great drainage of labour power ruined the rural economy of Upper Volta, a state of affairs which has not yet been rectified. The present Minister of Labour of Upper Volta, Mr. Bagaly, commenting on the situation inherited from the past, told us: "The government of Upper Volta hopes that labour power can be stabilized, for it is necessary for the development of our own country."

SCOURGE OF THE COLONIAL RULE

Sixty years and more of French colonial exploitation and oppression nearly ruined the country. The figures supplied by a French advisor of the Upper Voltaic Ministry of Public Health showed that each year 3,500 people fall victims to meningitis, 6,000 suffer from sleeping sickness, 200,000 from malaria and 120,000 from leprosy. According to these figures, one out of every thirty-five people in Upper Volta suffer from leprosy. The country has only sixty doctors, thirty-six of whom are Frenchmen. This means that an average of only one doctor is available for every 70,000 people.

Upper Volta has few modern mines and enterprises. A small oil-pressing factory, two hemp cord factories, some construction and transport companies, all mainly owned by the French, are its only resources. A branch of a French-owned African transport company in Bobo-Dioulasso, the second biggest city of the country, owns forty-seven trucks and buses and employs three hundred workers. Another small transport company owns eleven 5- to 7-ton trucks. The French West African Power Company holds a monopoly of the country's power supply, its annual electricity output being two million kwh. There are three small sawmills, a beverage factory,

two rice-husking mills and a cotton mill. The one printing shop in the country is at Ouagadougou. It is owned by the Catholic Church, has about a dozen workers and prints the one weekly paper which circulates in Upper Volta.

The backwardness of industry is reflected in the small number of industrial workers. According to 1960 statistics, the country has 21,000 wage-earners, including civil servants, members of professions and domestic workers. The mining, manufacturing, civil engineering and transport industries employ a total of 4,800 workers. About 200 workers are also employed in agriculture and forestry. These 5,000 workers represent about 0.1 per cent of the population, and only 602 of them are actually engaged in industry. The number employed in modernized industrial plants is much smaller. All this shows the low level of economic development in Upper Volta under the French colonial rule.

Upper Volta has no banks of its own. Its monetary unit is still the French African franc, and the French Bank of West Africa issues currency and handles foreign exchange.

Upper Volta has a very unfavourable balance of trade with France. In 1958 the country's imports exceeded its exports by 668 million F.A.C. francs, the excess was 950 million in 1959. The total value of French exports to Upper Volta in 1958 amounted to 1,190 million F.A.C. francs. The French imports from Upper Volta amounted to only 210 million. Upper Volta was somewhat compensated for this adverse trade-balance by trade with Ghana and other sterling areas, particularly with the former. These two adjoining countries have close economic relations and 45 per cent of Upper Volta's export in terms of money value, goes to Ghana.

It is interesting to note the kind of commodities that the French colonialists export to Upper Volta. According to 1959 statistics, more than one-third consisted of motorcycles, auto-

mobiles and their spare parts. Most of the nine hundred automobiles imported annually were sedans. Foodstuffs and textiles made up the second largest items imported from France into Upper Volta. Although the country produces fruit, its imports of vegetables, fruits, wine and other beverages were valued at 170 million F.A.C. francs, ten per cent of the total import value. Most of these commodities came from the Western countries, including Coco-Cola which was shipped in from the United States, and mineral water from Paris. The famous French *escargots,* edible snails, were airlifted from France to the tables of the luxurious restaurants and hotels in the larger cities of Upper Volta.

FRENCH "BENEVOLENT" EDUCATION

The level of education in Upper Volta, because of the colonialists' policy, is one of the lowest in West Africa. In 1951, only 2.56 per cent of the school-age children attended school. The present percentage is only 7.8. There was a total of 23,000 primary school pupils in 1961. Schools were not available for 600,000 school-age children. At present the country has only 1,800 middle school students.

The country's highest educational administration is the office of the Superintendent of Education, who takes charge of both secondary and primary school education. We met a superintendent of education, a Frenchman, at Ouagadougou. He said: "Ours is the highest educational authority in the country. All plans for promoting education in the country must first be examined and sanctioned by us. We have just received an official document from the Ministry of Education saying that the country is going to found a teachers' college, but it will be up to us to carry out the plan." It seemed, to us, that the

superintendent was trying hard to show off the "good work" done by the French Government in Upper Volta. He told us about a ten-year plan of education, which he said would be recommended to the African delegates who were to participate in a meeting to be called by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization in Addis Ababa, capital of Ethiopia, in 1961. The obvious aim of this plan was to publicize through UNESCO, the "civility" and "benevolence" of the French colonialists.

What is this plan after all? In the office of the Upper Voltaic Minister of Education we met a French advisor who informed us that the ten-year plan aimed to open three-year training courses in all parts of the country. "Its chief purpose is to teach the children French," he said. "Within ten years 50 per cent of the Upper Voltaic school-age children will have received such education." Of course the African people have more than once been told about such "plans" during French colonial rule. They understand only too well what will be the outcome of them.

GET RID OF THE "VENOMOUS SNAKES"

In 1957, Upper Volta became a "semi-autonomous republic" in the French Union, the following year, it was made into an "autonomous republic" of the French Community. In August 1960 it proclaimed its independence. These political changes were brought about by the struggles of the Upper Voltaic people, and in spite of the colonialists' attempts to hold on to their former colony.

When the young Upper Voltaic friends met us, they used the term "the venomous snakes in our pants", when referring to the colonial influences, particularly the French troops still

in their country. In April 1961, the representatives of the Counsel of the Entente composed of the Ivory Coast, Upper Volta, Dahomey and Niger, had a conference with the French Government in Paris and signed an "agreement on co-operation" which included a bilateral military alliance between each of these four countries and France. Maurice Yameogo, President of the Republic of Upper Volta, who was present at the meeting, refused to agree to the military alliance. Some of the young Upper Voltaic friends reminded us that their youth organization had sent a telegram to the President in Paris, telling him that they were opposed to French military bases and French troops in their country.

Young government workers of Upper Volta emphasized: "Our people won't tolerate any foreign troops here, nor military bases to be built in our country. The French troops will have to leave sooner or later, no matter whether they leave willingly, singing, or wailing their way home." It is clear that the Upper Voltaic people bitterly hate the "venomous snakes in their pants" and are anxious to get rid of them.

ON THE TERRITORY OF SENEGAL

A GLIMPSE OF DAKAR

Dakar is far more modern than any other capital in the hinterland of the former French West Africa. This was my first impression on arrival. The asphalt roads, the huge flaunting advertisements of the European and American commercial companies, the noisy night life, all make it look like a French city.

Century-old Dakar is the largest and most convenient seaport on the African coast, south of Casablanca, and it is one of the key transport centres in West Africa. It has 380,000 inhabitants, more than one-tenth of the country's entire population. The highest buildings in the capital are the fifteen-storeyed headquarters of the Air France, the fourteen-storeyed French Central Bank of West Africa, and the French Grand Hôtel de N'Gor which towers beside the sea. These three edifices house the nerve-centres of the Western profit-making commercial and financial enterprises. There are nineteen aviation companies in Dakar alone. Their parent companies are of Western origin, particularly French, American, British and Italian. They are keen competitors among themselves. The Pan-American World Airways has its offices on the first floor of the French Central Bank of West Africa building.

A host of seaside clubs, restaurants and bars extends along the seashore. An endless stream of cars converge on the beaches, where the former white rulers of this country swim,

play, and wallow in luxury. Nearby, Africans clad in rags are driven by poverty to beg in the streets for food.

The Presidential Residence of the Republic of Senegal was originally the mansion of the former French colonial governor. Situated on high ground it looks like a palace built on the mountain side overlooking the Atlantic Ocean.

The bronze statue of the former French colonial governor, Faidherbe, still remains in front of the Presidential Residence. He is shown standing beside a terrestrial globe, his jack-booted feet on the territory of Senegal, the colonial decree in his right hand and a sword in his left. How supercilious he looks!

The army and police barracks are in the western part of the capital. The largest French air-force base in West Africa is also situated in Dakar. Dependents of the French officers can be seen every now and then, peering through the wire fence erected around this heavily-guarded base. One often encounters groups of green-clad French gendarmes in the streets. A truck will suddenly halt and French gendarmes will jump down on to the roads. No one seems to be able to account for their presence in this African city.

AT THE BIGGEST SEAPORT OF WEST AFRICA

Dakar is not only the biggest but also the most modern port in West Africa. Situated in the centre of the West African coastline, it is a convenient place for the re-fuelling and repair of passenger boats, cargo steamers and warships.

The port was built in 1858, and was modernized and fitted with the latest equipment after World War II. It has always been the centre through which the French colonialists have

exported the life-blood of Senegal and other West African countries, especially the French Sudan.

The inner port covers 214 hectares. It is 250 metres wide at the entrance and 7,600 metres in length. It can accommodate thirty-two ships of over 10,000 tons each and can take liners with a draught of twelve metres. French warships of over 40,000 tons enter it with ease.

The port handles four million tons of freight annually, half of it gasoline. Nearly 8,000 ships call there each year, 60 per cent only stopping for re-fuelling. Fuel wharves have been erected for ocean-going liners and warships. The leading petroleum monopoly firms of the West — Anglo-Dutch Société Shell, Esso — Afrique Occidentale, Société des Pétroles B.P. de l'Afrique Occidentale, Mobil Oil Ltd., Texas Petroleum Co., Société Dakaroise des Pétroles Mory — all have money invested here, from which they all draw colossal profits. Their gasoline storages have a total capacity of 200,000 cubic metres. The port also has special wharves for trade in peanuts and phosphates, which are the two chief exports of Senegal. The Société Dakaroise de Stockage des Huiles d'Arachide and the Compagnie sénégalaise des Phosphates de Taïbe, both owned by Western capital, have pipelines and conveyer belt systems directly linked to the piers. Some other foreign enterprises have light railway lines leading right to the harbour. The warehouses are packed with burlap bags of peanuts. Every year, profit from the sweat and toil of the Senegalese peasants is pipelined in a never ending stream through this port to the Western countries.

A few kilometres out of the port is the small island of Gorée. It was one of the earliest settlements, and was seized by the French as a foothold for further penetration into West Africa. Both the Portuguese and the Dutch built forts on this island between the 15th and 17th centuries. The French colonialists

snatched this small island from the hands of the Dutch in 1677. For centuries, Gorée was one of the centres of the slave trade. This cruel business came to an end in the middle of last century, and the ruins of the old slave-warehouses can still be seen on the island. The cruel, bitter days of that infamous trade have gone for ever.

THE EARLIEST FRENCH COLONIAL BASES IN WEST AFRICA

The penetration of the French colonialists into tropical Africa began as early as the 17th century. By the middle of the century they occupied strategic points and commercial centres on the coastland, stretching from St. Louis of Senegal to Porto Novo, the present capital of Dahomey. The French merchants took many valuable products from West Africa, including gold, ivory, camel hair, rubber and palm fruit. Later on they engaged in the slave trade from which they drew profits for two hundred years. Senegal's St. Louis, Dakar, Rufisque and Gorée were the four earliest French colonial bases in West Africa.

For two centuries, the French colonialists endeavoured to penetrate into the interior from these bases, but it was not until the 1850s that they managed to intrude on a large scale, into the upper reaches of the Senegal and the Niger valleys.

In the 1870s and 80s, the headquarters of the French troops despatched 5,000 soldiers to the Senegal and Niger valleys to conquer the native tribes and their kingdoms. Towards the end of the 19th century, French forces successively occupied Guinea, Sudan, Dahomey, Ivory Coast, Upper Volta and Niger, and finally pushed up to Lake Chad, thus completing the French sphere of colonization in West Africa.

For a long time, Dakar was the place of residence for the governor of the French West African colonies, and also the general headquarters of the French colonial troops, gendarmes, police force and the French supreme court of West Africa. A number of colonial firms made the city the headquarters for their huge enterprises which were spread over West Africa. Dakar thus became the heart of the French rule of domination over the West African colonies, and one of the centres for air and sea communications between Europe, north and South America and Africa.

It was precisely for this reason that the French colonialists adopted certain special measures in regard to this colony. They declared, in 1848, that the inhabitants of their four first bases, Gorée, St. Louis, Dakar and Rufisque, were citizens of France and were thereby qualified to "elect" a deputy to the French Parliament. In this way they tried to split up the peoples of the African colonies.

The people, however, are incorruptible. The people of Senegal, like the peoples of other West African countries, carried on a heroic struggle against the Western intruders. In the middle of the 19th century, there emerged in Senegal a military genius, El Hadj Omar. He valiantly resisted aggression by the French colonialists and became one of their chief opponents in West Africa. The Ouolofs in Senegal also firmly resisted the French invasion.

Ahmadou, successor to El Hadj Omar, together with Samory Touré, leader of the Foulbés living in the Niger valley, fought many a hard battle along the banks of the Niger in the 1880s, during which the Senegalese people showed great bravery.

After World War II, the Senegalese people, a people with a glorious tradition in the struggle against imperialism and colonialism and for national independence, continued their hard

and bitter struggle and finally won the independence which they now enjoy.

"WE STAND ON THE SIDE OF OUR OWN PEOPLE"

The French colonialists have opened schools in West Africa, their main purpose being to instil slave mentality into the Africans, and train selected intellectuals to serve French colonial interests. There was not a single school of higher learning in French West Africa before World War II. Only a few secondary schools existed. A junior normal school was founded on Gorée at the beginning of the 20th century. It was transferred to the interior of Senegal in 1938. Several secondary schools, one of them a medical school, came into being in Dakar after World War II. The University of Dakar was not established until 1949.

We wanted to look around the university, but found it difficult to get the opportunity to do so. We later learned that the administration of the university is still in the hands of the French government. It is in fact still a French university and its president and professors are all Frenchmen, appointed by the French Government. The university cannot be visited without the special permission of its French president.

Just as we were giving up hope of ever entering its doors, someone came to our aid. We accidentally encountered some young friends of the students' organization in the university — l'Union Générale des Etudiants de l'Afrique Occidentale. They were very excited when they learned that we were from Peking, from the People's Republic of China. They asked us to convey their regards to the Chinese people and warmly invited us to

visit their university. Thus, we finally got the opportunity of seeing this school of higher learning.

We were told that there were 1,500 students in the university. Their homes are in Senegal, Ivory Coast, Guinea, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Dahomey, Togo, Upper Volta, Cameroon and parts of the former French Equatorial Africa. There are more students from Dahomey and Senegal than from any of the other countries.

The imperialists had intended to win over the African intellectuals through this university and other schools, but the young African intellectuals had their own views on the matter. Many of them, deeply imbued with nationalism, rejected the ideas instilled by the imperialists.

The fine group of young African students we met commented on the educational principles of the university.

"These principles are completely alien to the realities of life in Africa," one of them said. "The university is on the soil of Africa all right, but nothing African is taught here. In geography class we have lectures on the beauty of the Alps and the luxury of life in Paris. Our textbook on law deals with the French civil code. We are taught the history of France and of other Western countries. In the classes on economics, they are still teaching the Western theories which originated in the Middle Ages. The courses in medicine and pharmacy are no better. Though the African students have a strong desire to cure the diseases and sicknesses of the Africans, most of the methods of treatment they learn are suitable for conditions in France."

"They call it 'The History of Africa'!" sneered another student, referring to the teaching of history in the university. "All the national heroes of Africa are described as barbarous monsters. They wilfully distort our history!"

My visit to the University of Dakar has convinced me that the imperialists' desperate efforts to induce the young African intellectuals to serve imperialist interests have come to naught. There are many students in this university who are well disposed towards the people and strongly oppose imperialism. When the sad tidings of the murder of the great Congolese national hero, Premier Patrice Lumumba, by the U.S.-Belgian imperialists reached the university, the eight hundred students rushed into the street and protested in spite of police hindrance. They angrily protested outside the U.S. Embassy, raising their fists in vehement protest against this monstrous crime of the imperialists.

The students are fully aware of the political situation in West Africa. They realize that independence has been attained and that the remnants of colonialism are being wiped out in certain West African countries. They also realize that the imperialists are using new tactics to continue their exploitation and oppression of the people in some other countries in West Africa.

The aim of the imperialists in running universities in colonial and semi-colonial countries is to rear agents for themselves, but the result has turned out to be the opposite of what they expected. The students have not forgotten the trust their motherlands and people place in them. They have not sold their souls to the imperialists. Many intellectuals in Africa can say with pride, "We stand on the side of our own people. We firmly oppose imperialism."

PEANUTS AND PHOSPHATES

Visits to the factories in Dakar helped us considerably in coming to an understanding of Senegal's economic situation.

As mentioned above, France has always used Senegal as its centre for the domination of West Africa, and has more investments in Senegal than in any of its former West African colonies. In Dakar and its vicinity, there are plants for the processing of peanuts, sawmill, textile mill, flour mill, shoe factory, cement factory, brewery, and a canning factory. The only heavy industry, a railway repair deport, is at Thiès, seventy kilometres from Dakar. At Taïba, more than one hundred kilometres from Dakar, there is a modern phosphate mine. The big financial and commercial enterprises are all owned by foreign capital, among which the French Société Commerciale de l'Ouest Africain and the Bank of West Africa enjoy a monopoly position. The plantations and the means of transport are, in the main, controlled by foreign capital. U.S. capital, which began to infiltrate into Senegal after World War II, is particularly interested in the petroleum and phosphates of this country. In 1961, an "agreement on co-operation" was concluded between the two countries.

The Peanut Oil Mill, which employs four hundred workers, is one of the larger plants in Dakar. It covers 40,000 square metres of land, and has a total floor space of 16,000 square metres. It produces one hundred tons of peanut oil daily, necessitating the supply of three hundred tons of peanuts.

Peanuts are the life of Senegal's economy. The former Federation of Mali, which consisted of Sudan and Senegal, was somewhat insultingly nicknamed the "Peanut Federation" because these two countries, particularly Senegal, were the major peanut producers.

Senegal was turned into a country of monoculture with peanut as the chief cash crop, in accordance with the needs of the French plunderers during the last century of colonial rule. It is now the fourth largest peanut-growing country in the world. Eight hundred thousand hectares of land are

devoted to the cultivation of this crop. Peanuts, peanut oil and oilcakes account for 80 to 90 per cent of the country's export in value. The output of peanuts in Senegal has increased very rapidly since World War II, an indication that France's pillage of this country has been intensified. We saw a pyramid of peanuts outside the gates of the Dakar Peanut Oil Mill, an African was standing on guard to protect the interests of the French. The pyramid was saturated with the sweat and blood of the Senegalese peasants.

The mill we visited was controlled jointly by French, Danish and British capital, the French having the biggest share. It was founded in 1938, and practically all the machines, including the oil-presses and the peanut feeders, are as old as the mill itself. The Western capitalists certainly know how to make the most of the capital they have invested in the African enterprises and never replace the old machines unless it is absolutely necessary to do so. Small wonder that here one sees only old, worn-out European machines in the factories. At this particular mill, we were told that the only piece of new machinery installed since its opening was the conveyer belt, which was introduced into the mill in 1946.

In the workshops, the motors roared as the conveyer belt continuously fed the peanuts into the presses, which produce the fragrant oil. The presses were revolving at a very rapid rate, and for a moment, it seemed that I saw not peanut oil but the life-blood of the Senegalese people. The day will come when these already-exhausted machines will completely break down and be cast away by the Senegalese people. New machines owned by the Senegalese themselves will take the place of the old, and aromatic peanut oil will be produced by and for the Senegalese people themselves.

La Compagnie Sénégalaise des Phosphates de Taïba, situated over one hundred kilometres from Dakar, is a new enterprise.

Construction on the site began after the prospectors, sent by the French government in 1956, discovered phosphate deposits there. It was not put into production until March 1960. A French engineer told us that the company is capitalized by French, West German and U.S. financial interests and that six thousand million West African francs have been put into it as an initial investment.

The phosphate mining area, 1,300 hectares all told, is still expanding eastwards. It is virtually a desert adjoining the seashore, its sand and sand dunes extending to the horizon. When we visited the area an excavator of 1,300 tons capacity was at work. The ore lies beneath a seventeen-metre-thick layer of sand. Underground water had been struck. New sand dunes were piled high around the excavating machine.

The company, we were told, is able to secure 5,000 tons of ore daily, from which 2,000 tons of crude phosphates can be extracted. The ore averages six metres in depth. According to present calculations, it will take fifty years to extract all the deposit.

There is a wide difference between the treatment of the African workers and that of the 150 French employees of the company. The salaries of the French employees are several times, in some cases a dozen of times higher than those of the Africans. Furthermore, the French enjoy transport and better housing. Special shops are set aside exclusively for the use of the white men, where they have a better choice of goods. The African workers are barred from the right to these facilities.

A desert beside the sea rarely occurs naturally. One of the explanations for the existence of this particular desert goes back to the very early days, when the coastland from Dakar to St. Louis was submerged beneath the sea, hence the fine,

golden-coloured sand. In its depth is buried the rich resources which rightly belong to Senegal.

THE STRUGGLE OF THE RAILWAY WORKERS

On our way back to Dakar from Taïba, we arrived at Thiès, the headquarters of the Senegalese Railway Administration and an important railway junction.

We visited it as the guests of the Fédération des Cheminots du Sénégal. Wagué Amadou, First Secretary of the Fédération, gave a reception in our honour, in which about one hundred officials and workers of the Fédération participated. He recounted the history of the Fédération. The railway workers, whose class consciousness was awakened long ago, had a brilliant record in the anti-colonialist struggle. They founded the Fédération in 1928 and staged their first strike ten years later. The strike was bloodily suppressed by the armed French colonialists and some of the workers were shot. Later, the colonialists, working through the metropolitan reactionary trade union movement in France, engineered a split in the Fédération and usurped its leadership. Yet, in 1946, at a time when there was still no legislation providing for the organization of free trade unions, the workers managed to drive out the reactionary union leaders, who were working hand in glove with the colonial authorities, and who had bullied the workers on behalf of the colonial authorities for eighteen long years. The Fédération then entered into a new historical period. In co-operation with other railway trade unions of the West African countries, it organized the Fédération des Syndicats des Cheminots Africains de l'Afrique Occidentale Française, and plunged into the post-war national independence movement of West Africa.

The French colonialists used every conceivable means to persecute and suppress the West African railway trade union movement. They sacked many of the workers, carried out shameless disruptive activities inside the Fédération des Syndicats des Cheminots Africains de l'Afrique Occidentale Française and set up a railway workers' "Free Trade Union" affiliated to the "Confédération Générale du Travail-Force Ouvrière". They also set up many other trade associations to serve their own needs.

The Senegalese railway workers, however, have not forgotten their glorious past in the anti-colonialist struggle. In spite of all the vicious schemes of the colonialists, in spite of all their underhand activities to corrupt and disintegrate the Fédération des Cheminots du Sénégal from within, the strength of the workers continues to increase and they will not be subdued or deceived by the colonialists.

Our reception ended in a very warm friendly atmosphere. As we parted Wagué Amadou solemnly said: "Please convey the Senegalese railway workers' friendship and regards to the Chinese railway workers and to all the Chinese people."

THE GOODWILL OF THE SENEGALESE PEOPLE

As a Chinese correspondent, I was very much impressed by the Senegalese people's goodwill towards the Chinese people. Wherever we went, people waved greetings to us or came up to express their friendship. Some Senegalese asked: "When will People's China set up an embassy here?" I explained the Chinese people's opinion on this question. There is only one China, that is, the People's Republic of China. Taiwan is Chinese territory. The Chinese people are determined to liberate it. The U.S. imperialists have occupied this Chinese

territory by force and are supplying military equipment to Chiang Kai-shek. They are fostering his traitorous clique which the 650 million Chinese people have long disowned. The U.S. imperialists attempt to perpetuate the occupation of Taiwan by their scheme to create "two Chinas". We Chinese people resolutely oppose this intrigue. In Africa, the U.S. imperialists are doing all they can to impose the "two Chinas" plot on the African people by prodding some of the newly independent African countries into establishing ties with the Chiang Kai-shek clique. The U.S. imperialists are using the Chiang Kai-shek clique as a tool to obstruct relations between People's China and some of the African countries. The attitude of the Chinese people is that countries which want to establish diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China of the 650 million Chinese people, must resolutely sever all ties with the Chiang Kai-shek clique and agree that Taiwan is an inalienable part of the People's Republic of China. We believe that the African people, who are striving to safeguard their own independence, will support the Chinese people's decisive stand.

I recall an incident in Dakar on Id-el-Corban, one of the main Moslem festivals, in May 1961. I went to a great square to celebrate the joyous occasion with the Senegalese people. While I was watching the surging sea of people, a Senegalese came up to me.

"Excuse me, but are you from People's China?"

"Yes," I answered.

"We heard over the radio that you had arrived. At long last we have met you. Please tell the Chinese people that all the Senegalese people are their good friends."

I firmly grasped the outstretched friendly hand.

A JOURNEY TO TOGO

AMIDST THE ALOE PLANTS

Lomé, the capital of the Republic of Togo, has a population of 50,000. There used to be a lot of aloe plants in the city, but the colonialists had them all cut down, so we were told by a friend in Lomé. Although only a few aloes are now to be seen around the capital, it retains its old name Lomé meaning "amidst the aloe plants".

When we arrived in Lomé, we stayed at the Hôtel du Bénin, the largest in the capital. It stands on the shore of the Bight of Bénin and faces the Atlantic. The pier of the port of Lomé lies in front of the hotel. Around the hotel and along the seafront are government buildings and the residences of the ministers. Independence Plaza is a new landmark of the city. In the plaza is a stone statue in commemoration of Independence Day. An official of the Togolese Ministry of Foreign Affairs who was showing us around ruefully said: "Unfortunately the statue was designed by a Frenchman." We had a good look at the statue. It was a woman with eyes shut, stretching out her long arms imploringly. I don't propose to comment on the "artistic value" of it, nor what its designer had tried to express, but I understood the sentiments of the Togo official, and felt sure that a Togolese artist would have designed the statue quite differently.

Lomé has a Catholic church, with seating accommodation for several hundred. Catholicism has penetrated deeply and ex-

tensively among the people in the coastal regions of West Africa. About 60 per cent of the population are Catholics and 25 per cent are Protestants, according to the mayor of the city. There are only a few Muslims. Some of the schools, especially the secondary schools, were founded by the Catholic Church, and the school mistress of the girls' academy is a nun. There is also a school for priests in Lomé. The extensive rural population, however, still follow their traditional religion, fetishism.

Nestling against the Catholic church is an African market, where agricultural produce, handicraft articles and other local products are displayed. These include maniocs and a kind of talc powder which the African women love to use. It makes the skin soft and smooth, so we were told. In addition to these local products, the market is packed with foreign goods, such as cigarettes, soaps, nails and combs, all imported from the Western countries.

The Unilever Company, the British monopoly enterprise which operates under the name of the United Africa Company, still has an office near the Lomé harbour. This foreign monopoly enterprise which has operated for many years in Togo, has not changed a bit since the country was declared independent.

The Bé tribe, ancient inhabitants of Lomé, used to live in a compact community in the Bé area, a suburb of Lomé. Only a few of this tribe still remain. They live in huts and earn their living as pedlars. They speak a different language from that of the Ewes, tattoo their faces with special patterns, and have their own customs and habits.

Fringing the Bé area is a rough border highway which winds through dense coconut palm groves. One side of the highway is Togo and the other side is Ghana. There are two cigarette

stalls along the road. The people on the Togo side trade with C.F.A.[1] francs, while those on the other side use the pound sterling or the Ghanaian pound.

Colonial rule was responsible for the uneven development of Lomé. This is shown in regard to the supply of electricity. The city's yearly power consumption has increased in recent years, from 250,000 to 500,000 kilowatts. More electric lights, fans and air-conditioning systems have been installed, but electricity is still a luxury to the ordinary people in Lomé. Only some houses and the newly built high-class hotels can afford it. When the main thoroughfares and large hotels are dazzling with electric light in the evenings, only dim lights are to be seen in the average homes.

HISTORY OF THE SLAVE COAST

The history of Togo is marked by many critical changes. In the remote past the country was made up of many tribal states and small kingdoms. The Portuguese were the first foreigners to make inroads into Togo in the mid-fifteenth century. The colonialists kidnapped the Negro people from the inland of Ghana and Upper Volta and sold them on the coast of Togo, whence they were shipped to America. The seaboard of Togo and Dahomey was then known to the European colonialists as the "Slave Coast".

Following on the heels of the Portuguese came the British, French and German colonialists. It was during an intense scramble to exploit Africa during the 19th century that the foreigners established colonial domination over Togo. Anécho, forty miles to the east of Lomé, was then the centre of Togo,

[1] Colonies Françaises d'Afrique.

and its Chief was forced by the British colonialists, in February 1884, to allow it to become a British protectorate. German troops suddenly landed in Togo and forced the Chief to change his decision and the tribal state then became a German protectorate. On December 24 of the following year, the Berlin Conference, a meeting convened to share out the loot of Africa among the imperialist powers, formally recognized German authority over Togo. This, however, did not satisfy the upstart German colonialists and, taking Togo as a base, they pressed northwards, meeting with stiff resistance from the French. The latter then settled down in Dahomey in 1894 and frequent conflicts arose between French and German colonialists over spheres of influence. When World War I broke out in 1914, the German governor of Togo proclaimed the colony as neutral. This met with resolute opposition from Britain and France, who had always desired to possess Togo. British troops landed on the Togolese coast and French forces marched westwards from Dahomey on August 12, 1914. The Germans were forced to surrender to the allied troops four days later. After the war, Togo was carved up and portioned out between Britain and France. Later the League of Nations made Togo a mandated territory, thus acknowledging the British and the French occupation.

The United Nations, ignoring the Togolese wish for independence after World War II, decided that Togo should be put under the trusteeship of Britain and France. When the Gold Coast won its independence and changed its name to Ghana on March 6, 1957, the former British trust territory Togoland was incorporated with Ghana by virtue of a resolution of the United Nations. Later French Togoland proclaimed its independence on April 27, 1960.

Such is the tortuous path of the former "Slave Coast".

GLIMPSES OF TOGO'S ECONOMY

Togo occupies an area of 55,600 square kilometres, 600 kilometres from north to south, and 150 from east to west on the widest part. Coconut, oil palm, cocoa, banana and other evergreen tropical plants grow on the plains along the coastal regions. Grasslands stretch to the north, and on the lower plateau which is five hundred metres above sea level, coffee grows in abundance. There are mountains in the central part of the country. They are part of a range which extends into Ghana.

The country has a population of 1,440,000. They are made up of Ewes, Minas, Haussas, Dagombas, Tims, Cotocolis and others. The Ewes, who comprise the majority, constitute one-third of the total population. Ewe, the popular language of Togo, has its written form in which the Latin alphabet is used.

Togo's economy was thoroughly colonialized by German domination for thirty years and French domination for over forty years. Its main agricultural products are cocoa, coffee, dried coconut and palm oil. The first two items constitute sixty per cent of the total value of Togo's export. Togo is still unable to produce enough grains for home needs and in 1959 had to import 3,680 tons of rice alone. Though Togo has managed to increase its output of cocoa and coffee every year, its income from the export of these two products has decreased because of reductions in the prices of these commodities on the international market. For instance, in 1959, the country got 1,500 million C.F.A. francs for 8,300 tons of exported cocoa, and in 1960, Togo exported 9,400 tons of cocoa for which only 1,400 million C.F.A. francs were received. There was a fairly good harvest in 1960, the first year of Togo's independence. The total tonnage of Togo's exports in 1960 was 23 per cent above that of the previous year, but

its foreign exchange earnings were 18 per cent less than 1959. The main reason for this decrease was the fall in the prices of cocoa and coffee on the world market. Such is the economic and financial situation Togo now faces after being a French colony for forty years.

We did not have time to visit Togo's rural districts, but we passed by some of the villages. The coconut farmers live in crude earthen huts, which are thatched with coconut bark and leaves. The walls enclosing the huts are made of the same materials, and the fences are woven, the long stems of the coconut palm leaves being used for that purpose. Coconuts are piled high beside the huts. Women and children cut them into halves and place them out on the ground to dry. The dried coconuts are sold and shipped to France, West Germany and the Netherlands. A coconut farmer usually takes care of a hundred or more trees and harvests the fruit every three months, that is four harvests annually. One hundred trees yield about a ton of coconuts a year.

The huts are gloomy inside and their owners are poverty-stricken. Women wear only a skirt-like garment and the children go naked. Togo's rural poverty and backwardness is the culmination of age-long colonial rule.

Going further inland we saw more farmlands, where maize, manioc, castor-oil plants and peanuts are cultivated. Maize and manioc are the peasants' staple food.

The people on the northern tropical pasturelands rear cattle, and according to 1958 statistics, Togo had 12,000 cattle, 345,000 sheep and 228,000 pigs.

German and French colonialists introduce very little industry into Togo and the country has only a few small-scale processing plants, oil-pressing plants, sawmills and handicraft workshops. The phosphate mine, opened by five French firms, started to produce in 1960. It has been roughly estimated

that the mine will last 200 years. Its yearly output at present is 700,000 tons. Most of the phosphates are shipped to France, some are also shipped to the United States.

HISTORY NEVER REPEATS ITSELF

The Togolese people having won their independence, are naturally anxious to wipe out colonial influence and build up their country. We are very happy to see that the Togolese are making progress in this respect.

We visited a hospital in Lomé and found that it had three Togolese doctors. We also visited a primary school with twelve classes, all the teachers of these classes were Togolese. In a country like Togo where half of the students study in missionary-run schools, a school founded by the natives attracts much attention. When we visited this school, the pupils were doing their lessons. One of the boys told us that he knew that Peking is the capital of China. Another pupil stood up and sang us a song. The words were something like this: "We are working and we shall never slacken our effort. . . ." I found the African children extremely intelligent. We also visited the Lomé broadcasting station which was being enlarged.

We met the ministers of the government, who are all Togolese. Frenchmen, however, still hold important offices as general secretaries or advisors to the ministries. We were told by the Togolese that practically all the officials governing the four districts, seventeen administrative areas and the two hundred counties are Frenchmen.

A month after Togo proclaimed its independence, the French and Togolese governments signed agreements on foreign relations, currency and military affairs. France has sent a so-

called mission of aid and co-operation to Togo and French capital monopolizes the newly discovered phosphate mines. Oil deposits have been discovered in Togo and U.S. oil companies have been given the rights of exploration and exploitation.

The present influence of foreign-owned enterprises can be seen from the number of workers and office employees they hire. Togo has 14,300 wage-earners, including 6,000 civil servants and employees in small public enterprises, 2,000 domestic workers, and 6,300 employees in the service of foreign enterprises. One-third of the 6,300 are employed by well-known foreign companies. For instance, the British-owned United Africa Company employs about 400, the Compaines Française de l'Afrique Occidentale about 300, the Bénin phosphate mine 400, and the Renault Automobile Repair Works in Lomé 90. When we were visiting Togo, Togolese workers employed at the Renualt repair works were on strike against the foreign capitalist oppression and against racial discrimination, which penalizes native-born workers. The Togolese workers' movement is bound to develop in close association with the Togolese people's anti-imperialist and anti-colonial struggles.

After Togo's independence the Togolese and Bonn governments signed a series of agreements on trade and economic co-operation, and on "protection of investments". West Germany's "advisors" and "experts" have again returned to the country and the Deutsche-Togolese trading company which monopolized Togo's trade half a century ago is preparing to resume its operation in Lomé. The last German governor of Togo, who left the country in 1914, has come back and is again active in Togo. Footballs were included in the baggage of this corpulent old colonialist who apparently wanted to create the impression that he was only interested in sports.

Many Togolese thought differently and said: "The German governor has come back!"

The Bonn government has not lost interest in the former German colony which it held before World War I, and is now trying to stage a come-back. The times, however, have changed. Gone are the days of the 19th century when Germany opened up colonies in Africa as it wished. The Africa of the 1960s is resonantly tolling the death-knells of the new and old colonialists, who too long have trampled the continent underfoot.

SEED OF FRIENDSHIP WILL BLOSSOM AND BEAR FRUIT

After visiting Togo we are convinced that the Togolese people want to be the friends of the Chinese people. When we were staying in Hôtel du Bénin, many young people, workers, trade union and medical workers came to visit us. They expressed their wish to develop friendly relations with the People's Republic of China and the 650 million Chinese people.

I met many Togolese friends, who all emphasized that the Togolese people recognize only one China, and that is the People's Republic of China — the People's China, as they call it. A youth met us by accident, and when he learned that we were from Peking he became very excited, enthusiastically telling us: "I know that it is People's China that gives support to the struggles of the Algerian people and the Congolese people. It was also People's China that gave support to the Egyptian people in their struggle over the Suez Canal. You are the best friends of the African people."

The technicolour newsreel on the celebration of the tenth anniversary of the People's Republic of China aroused intense

interest among the Togolese people. One of the Togolese ministers after seeing the film said: "China's achievements in reconstruction make us more confident of what we can do." A Togolese women's organization, after learning that the newsreel had been shown, asked that it be specially shown for the women. The Togolese people's friendship towards the Chinese people impressed us very deeply. When we were leaving the country, a Togolese friend, who saw us off, said: "The seed of friendship has been sown. It will surely blossom and bear fruit in days to come." We replied: "Indeed, we have never doubted about that, especially when Togo has such warm sunshine and rich soil."

A TOUR OF DAHOMEY

ON OUR WAY TO COTONOU

June heralds the rainy season in West Africa, and in Togo we ran into our first African tempest. It was furious and violent. The sky was clear, suddenly a strong gale blew in from the sea and a fierce torrential rain fell, as if it were trying to cleanse the land with its pent-up energy. This kind of weather is so typical of the African character that it makes an apt comparison with the political climate of the continent.

We left Lomé in Togo for Cotonou, the commercial port of Dahomey, which was to be the last stop during our stay in West Africa. As we proceeded along the road, we occasionally caught a glimpse of thatched cottages, which seemed to be the dwellings of the peasants who were engaged in the cultivation of coconut palms. A few fishermen could be seen on the beach casting nets.

At the border a Dahomean policeman came up, saluted us, and said, "I've just had a telephone call from the Foreign Ministry, informing me about your arrival. Welcome to our country, Chinese friends!" We thanked him for his kind greeting and proceeded.

As soon as we crossed the border, we were very much impressed by the abundance of water courses. Part of the border line between Dahomey and Togo is the 350-kilometre-long River Mono. Once across the border the coconut groves gradually disappeared and thick palm forests came into sight. We were

now in a country famed for her oil palms. Stretch after stretch of water and block after block of palm forests flashed past us, as our cars speeded towards Cotonou along the shores of the Bight of Bénin.

THE HISTORY OF THE KINGDOM OF DAHOMEY

The ancient history of Dahomey, like that of other West African countries, has yet to be revealed. Judging by the available materials the kingdom of Dahomey, with Abomey as her centre, was founded in the 1620s by King Tacodonou (1620-45). He was succeeded by Ouegbadja (1645-85) and Akaba (1685-1708). During the reign of King Agaja (1708-32), Dahomey's fourth monarch, the kingdom extended to the Gulf of Guinea. It was most flourishing under King Guezo (1818-58) who pushed the western frontier into the land of the kingdom of Ashanti, an area which is now a part of Ghana. Guezo's palaces are still preserved in the old capital, Abomey, in central Dahomey. The walls are decorated with many interesting reliefs which record outstanding events in the history of the country.

The kingdom had its own system of government, before it was invaded by the Western colonialists. The country was divided into administrative regions governed by officials who were appointed by the king. There was a well-organized regular army composed of soldiers selected from these regions. The most striking feature of this army was its Women's Corps, which had been in existence from the reign of King Guezo. The women soldiers usually served as the king's bodyguards, but later they took part in the war against the French colonialists. They were fine examples of African women's heroic spirit.

The kingdom also had an administrative system. The government institutions took a regular census. On every New Year's Day, the head of the family handed to the village chief a bag containing one shell for every member of his family. The village chief then counted all the shells, which had been handed in and thus ascertained the population of his village. The officials of the administrative regions got their figures by adding up the shells from each of the village chiefs. When all the shells subsequently arrived at the capital, the statistics for the whole country were easily worked out.

BEHANZIN AND THE STRUGGLE AGAINST THE CRUEL COLONIALISTS

The Western colonialists first invaded Dahomey in the 16th century. The Portuguese established the Fort of Saint-Jean-Boptiste at Ouidah on the Bight of Bénin in 1580. It was used as a centre for the slave trade of the West African coast. The French colonialists landed at Ouidah towards the end of the next century, and in the middle of the 19th century extended their power to Porto Novo. They set up an oil palm company in the vicinity to exploit the palm groves of the coastland. The British colonialists occupied Lagos in 1861 and also tried to penetrate into Porto Novo. Thus arose a complicated struggle between Britain, France and the kingdom of Dahomey.

When we visited Dahomey, the French administrator of the Central Province gave us his version of how the French came to Dahomey. He said, "The French fought in order to protect the smaller and weaker neighbours from invasion by the kingdom of Dahomey, then built around Abomey." He completely distorted the truth, the dirty deeds of the French colonialists cannot

be concealed by the century-old tale of "protection", a term which is still being peddled by the new and old colonialists in spite of the fact that it was long ago exposed as a deliberate and dastardly lie.

At the end of the 19th century, the French colonialists, taking advantage of the conflicts between the kingdom of Dahomey and the kingdom of Porto Novo, concluded a "protectorate treaty" with the king of Porto Novo, so that they could concentrate their attack on Dahomey.

Many national heroes of Dahomey arose and led the people in a long, stubborn struggle against the Western colonialists. They had only broad swords, spears and home-made guns for arms. In the middle of the 18th century, the king of Dahomey sent troops to attack the colonial fort at Ouidah and killed the Portuguese governor. Later King Guezo also attacked Ouidah.

Behanzin, who was the most outstanding of all the kings of Dahomey, reigned from 1889 to 1894. He resisted the French invasion for four years. In 1890 the French colonial troops, under the pretext of "protecting" the kingdom of Porto Novo, launched a surprise attack on Cotonou near Porto Novo. They bombarded this African city and arrested all the Dahomean officials. Behanzin refused to yield to the colonialists, mustered five thousand soldiers and led an assault on Porto Novo which was then under French control. The Dahomean troops chopped down all the oil palms around the city, thus inflicting a crippling blow at the finances of the French companies engaged in the oil palm trade. The French colonial troops were compelled to enter into negotiations with the kingdom of Dahomey in April.

On May 2 of the same year, Behanzin wrote to the French colonial governor, condemning the barbarous acts of the colonialists. Part of the letter read:

> . . . Your predecessor called our chiefs to the market centre in Cotonou for a talk and then arrested them. He sent troops to kill our people, not even sparing pregnant women and babies. . . .

This letter shows some of the heinous crimes committed by the Western colonialists in their endeavours to establish colonies in Africa.

A French column led by Colonel Dodds marched against Abomey in 1892 and a new war began, far crueler than any previous war. The Dahomean people, in defiance of guns, machine-guns and other superior weapons, put up a heroic resistance. Behanzin's Women Corps also went into action, and fighting shoulder to shoulder with the men, dealt heavy blows against the invaders. The troops of Behanzin, brave, tactful and well-organized, were able to defeat the French colonial troops in several engagements with their primitive weapons, they killed the French commander in the battle of Dogba. Behanzin bought some guns from the Westerners and established an artillery corps, under the command of African officers, to defend his country. Even after the war was over the French soldiers in the Dodds Column refused to believe that these artillery-men had been trained by the Africans. However, they had to admit that Behanzin's army was the strongest and the most tenacious of resistance forces, and a very tough opponent.

The French colonialists were able by military supremacy to capture Abomey in 1893. On the day they broke into the city, they raped and massacred, looted the palaces and mausoleums of the imperial house, and set fire to the old city. Despite this setback, Behanzin and a section of his soldiers continued to fight until he was captured in 1894. He was subsequently exiled to Martinique Island and died in Algeria in 1906.

A glorious chapter in the history of Dahomey was thus concluded, but the patriotism shown by Behanzin lives for ever in the hearts of its people. The word "Behanzin", Dahomeans told us, means that the people support their king in the achievement of his great task. Behanzin had certainly lived up to the expectations of his people. He had written a glorious page in the history of his country. There is not the slightest doubt that in this era of the people, the Dahomeans will make still greater achievements and new heroes will emerge.

ON THE BIGHT OF BÉNIN

The capital Porto Novo and the commercial port Cotonou, originally only a few scores of kilometres apart, have now been virtually combined into one city. The various departments of the central government of the Republic of Dahomey are located in this new political, economic and cultural centre.

Cotonou is the only sea outlet of Dahomey and also one of the few ports through which the West African inland countries, such as Niger and Upper Volta, have access to the sea. Like the port of Lomé, its main purpose is for the transport of goods. Every year, it accommodates about 400 ships and handles 200,000 tons of merchandise and 20,000 passengers. When we visited the port, we saw French, British and U.S. ships lying at anchor. Many small boats plied to and fro among them, loading and unloading goods. Bags of oil palm seeds were stacked on the wharf, ready to be shipped to Europe. On the shore were several piles of big stones — material for the building of a new port.

Cotonou has 60,000 inhabitants and does not appear to be a crowded city. There are not many buildings, the largest being the five-storeyed, column-shaped French Central Bank

of West Africa. The clock on the gate of the French Board of Trade, which stands near the sea, still ticks on in the service of its colonial master. A light railway stretches straight to the wharf from the French Société Commerciale de l'Ouest Africain. There is a post and telegraph office, a railway bureau and also some French and British stores, such as the French-owned Monoprix and the British-owned Kinsway.

The Grand Hôtel de la Plage where we stayed is also owned by the French. When we were there it was crammed with visitors from the United States, France and other European countries. From the second floor one could look right into an open-air cinema which was situated next door. Films were shown every night. American hula dance, Paris night clubs and other such trivial things, which have nothing in common with the lives and aspirations of the African people, were the usual scenes on the screen. One of the films told an absurd story about a worthless lazy fellow, who, dreaming in the haze of his own cigarette smoke, was transformed into a young millionaire. The film showed him wearing a swallow-tailed coat, visiting ball-rooms and gambling dens, and leading the fast decadent life of a profligate. The film transported the audience into a fantastic wonderland.

Several newspapers circulate in Cotonou. *Flag* is a small mimeographed paper produced by the Africans. We saw a copy of its March 17, 1961 issue, which frontpaged an article entitled "Glory to Lumumba". It voiced the indignation of the African people at the murder of their hero by the imperialists. The Catholic *La Croix au Dahomey* is an entirely different publication. It is edited by R.P. Grenot, a European priest who went to West Africa, not to preach a religious gospel, but to carry out propaganda for imperialism. In the 1961 June issue of this well-printed periodical, he wrote an editorial which states that "Communism is a forbidden fruit

and it is precisely because it is forbidden that people are all the more eager to taste it." He said that many Africans have been "poisoned by this Red venom", and then speaking with the voice of the U.S. State Department, he declared that "Communists have established a slavery system unparalleled in human history" and that "Communism is a devil". This slander-monger who used religion as a tool to serve his ulterior purpose, had to admit that the Africans had told the priests that their statements are "utter fabrications"!

During my stay in Cotonou, I visited the country's national radio station, which is situated between Cotonou and Porto Novo. It is a very small station, equipped with only a 4-kilowatt transmitter. According to the Dahomean officials, the station is to be expanded and the power of the transmitter increased to thirty kilowatts.

It is only half an hour's ride by car from Cotonou to Porto Novo. Porto Novo is not a new city. It was quite a fair-sized one, when it was taken by the French in the middle of the 19th century. A Catholic mission was established there in 1862. The British and French colonialists fought each other for a long time for possession of the city. They finally concluded a deal, in 1898, which made it a French colonialist sphere of influence. Thenceforth Porto Novo groaned under the occupation of France for nearly a century.

THE OLD PALMS

Dahomey occupies an area of 112,000 square kilometres and has two million inhabitants. Its coastland in the southern part is low and flat and is divided by rivers and lakes. It yields an abundance of palms, coconuts, fish and other sea food. In the central mountainous regions the main crops are maniocs, maize, sorghum, groundnut, cotton and tobacco.

Oil palms are Dahomey's most important wealth. Ever since the French first penetrated into this land, they have held a monopoly in its production of palm oil.

The fifty thousand tons of palm-kernels, and sixteen thousand tons of palm oil sold abroad every year, accounts for 67 per cent of the country's gross export value.

Oil palms cover more than one half of Dahomey's cultivated land. They are found mostly in the coastal region and from south to north stretch a distance of 120 kilometres. We saw a thick palm forest in the suburbs of Porto Novo-Cotonou. My hands were smeared with fragrant oily juice as I tried to pick a fruit from the tree.

The local people say that the oil palms of Dahomey were planted more than half a century ago and, like the people in the colonies, have now been exploited to the limit. The trees are getting too old to be useful and their oil is practically exhausted, consequently the production of palm oil is dwindling. This is a serious problem and one which threatens Dahomey's economy. The Dahomean government is trying to renew the palm groves and as an experiment is planting twenty thousand hectares of palm saplings. This is not a simple project, for it takes seven years for a young oil palm to bear fruit. The renewal of the groves necessitates persistent efforts and the surmounting of a great number of difficulties.

Although Dahomey is an agricultural country, like all the other newly independent African countries, it feels the strain of the problem of finding food supplies for its people. Eighty-five per cent of its food crops are farinaceous tubers. It imports rice every year. The country, rich in water resources, should be suitable for rice planting, but the French "paddy crop experts", after carrying out all sorts of research in Dahomey, claim that rice will not grow there!

The newly independent African people naturally cherish the hope of the industrialization of their country. As the French colonialists never intended to develop factory, colliery or other enterprises in Dahomey, the country has practically no industry. After Dahomey had won its independence in 1960, the government began to tackle the question of industrialization, as a means of bringing about economic independence. Dahomey's industrial plan was unfortunately drawn up by the "French experts". One of these imperialist representatives told us: "Industries processing agricultural products are the only ones that can be developed under Dahomey's future economic plan. It is not practical to set up factories and collieries here. Firstly, there would be no market for their products, because the Dahomean peasants are poor, and secondly, the country lacks minerals. . . ." In brief, according to the "French experts", Dahomey does not have the conditions for industrialization. This is the viewpoint the colonialists have always advanced. The Dahomeans do not accept it.

Some Dahomean officials told us that their government had worked out a four-year economic plan which came into operation in 1962. The total cost of the scheme was estimated at thirty billion C.F.A. francs, most of which would have to come from investments by foreign capital. A Frenchman, who holds office under the Dahomean Government, told us that 80 per cent of the capital would have to come from foreign countries, France had promised to "aid" Dahomey with seven billion C.F.A. francs. This "aid" will include the construction of a new port in Cotonou, which, according to the plan, would not be completed before 1964. The "aid" was also to include a "research fund" which would be made available on condition that France carried out the "scientific research" in Dahomey. The funds would be raised by French research institutes for research in connection with the production of olive oil, palm oil

and coconut oil. The subsidies to be paid to French import and export merchants and the high salaries of the French "experts" and advisors in Dahomey were all counted as part of the "aid". These highly-paid Frenchmen, who live under luxurious conditions, were in the habit of saying: "We are paid by the French Government." Their government, however, declared that it had given the money as aid to Dahomey. It seems that the French Government is trying to kill two birds with one stone, and bag both profit and a good name for a service rendered mainly to further its own interests.

U.S. "aid" has also begun to penetrate into Dahomey. It was said that the United States had signed with the four member states of the Conseil de l'Entente, including Dahomey, a "technical and economic agreement". Its total "aid" was said to amount to 7.5 million U.S. dollars.

The Parti Dahoméen de l'Unité at its National Convention in March 1961, according to the report issued in the government organ, "L'Aurore", stressed the importance of agriculture and the need to survey the country's underground resources. It also planned to set up a cement works, a palm oil plant and to erect a "hotel of international standard" in Cotonou.

The Dahomean people strongly desire to develop their national economy independently and are seeking to find a way for such development. Like all other African countries, it has favourable conditions for building up its own economy. The prospect is bright for the African people.

VISITING THE ANCIENT CITY OF ABOMEY

On the last day of our stay in the Dahomean Republic, we visited, with great interest, the ancient city of Abomey, in the middle part of the country. Most of the houses in the city

are built of red earth, and their weather-beaten outer-walls are blackened by kitchen smoke. The market place was packed with all kinds of stalls, the displayed goods being sheltered by improvised bamboo awnings. The houses and market showed the aged character of the city. However, when I arrived at the official residence of the governor of the Central Province at Abomey, I was amazed by a striking contrast. His mansion was imposing and magnificent. It looked like a palace and was more luxuriously furnished than the Presidential Palace in Porto Novo. A Frenchman who introduced himself as the Governor of the Central Province of Dahomey lived in it.

The highlight of our day was the visit to the ruins of the ancient palaces of the Dahomean Kingdom.

Originally built by King Guezo, row after row of inner palaces were enclosed within the six-foot-high red earth walls. Figures of birds, men and animals were drawn on the walls of one of the inner palaces and on pieces of cloth decorating the walls. I was told that they were records of actual events, and were valuable historical data.

The golden thrones, used by the different kings, were displayed in an exhibition hall, and the portraits of Behanzin and other kings hung on its walls. The three reigns from Guezo to Behanzin (1818-94) represent the historical period, when the Dahomean people fought against the inroads of the European colonialists. Although the kingdom perished, its history was never tarnished. The last king, Behanzin, true to the heroic spirit of the Dahomean people, refused to yield to the enemy, and died for his country. The French colonialists, attempting to stain the clean pages of Dahomean history, put the national traitor, Behanzin's younger brother, Agollagbo, on the throne. This shameless puppet came to an infamous end, and the French colonialists discarded him when they no longer had need of

him. He was imprisoned in Gabon in 1900, and died a shameful death.

We also visited the exhibition halls where ritual vessels used by the kings and presents from foreigners were displayed. There was glassware presented by the British merchants, and urns and leather drums from the Portuguese. In the arms exhibition hall were displays of swords and spears, and also the cannons which King Behanzin bought from the Germans. The kings' robes, their umbrellas and large travelling hammocks complete with enormous carrying-poles, were also on show.

There were four cannons, made in Portugal, at the foot of the wall of an inner palace. Twelve slaves had been paid for each cannon. I suddenly realized that the presents sent by the British and Portuguese merchants were conclusive evidences of the slave-trade carried out by the self-same "Western civilized people".

Although those dark ages belong to the past, the Dahomean people's struggle against imperialism and colonialism still goes on.

After we had left the Dahomean Republic we heard some good news. On August 1, 1961, a year after the independence of Dahomey, the Dahomean Government expelled the Portuguese governor from the Fort de Saint-Jean-Baptiste, Ouidah, and recovered the territory which had been occupied by the Portuguese colonialists for about 380 years. The Portuguese flag was pulled down and the Dahomean flag was raised in its stead. In this former Portuguese colony of eleven acres, the "governor" was the only Portuguese left. Knowing that he was going to be escorted out of the fort, he deliberately set fire to his "governor's palace", and even tried to destroy his motor-car rather than let it pass into the hands of the Dahomean Government. This malicious destruction taught the Dahomean people, that the colonialists would never relinquish their

power willingly and that even on their last day they would struggle desperately and take every chance to show their hostility and act against the people's interest. It clearly demonstrated that the African people's fight against imperialism, colonialism and for national liberation cannot be other than strenuous, acute, and a matter of life or death.

We left Cotonou on June 11, 1961. We bid farewell to the Bight of Bénin, to the surging waves of the great sea, to the Dahomean people and all the peoples of West Africa!

The waves billowed and foamed on the seacoast of West Africa. Overhead the clouds and overcast sky forecast thunder, lightning and storm. Let the churning sea roar! Let the rain dash down and submerge the imperialist pirates, so that this vast stretch of fertile and beautiful land will for ever belong to its own brave and diligent African people.

THE MARTYR'S BLOOD IS NEVER SHED IN VAIN

CEMETERY ON THE SHORE OF THE ATLANTIC

After our interview with the Guinean President, Sékou Touré, at his official residence on March 3, 1961, we went with Mme. Veuve Felix Roland Moumié to visit a cemetery on the Atlantic shore.

The hot African sun beat down on the Conakry seaside burial ground, which was covered with seemingly endless rows of tomb-stones. The only sign of life was an aged caretaker. Desolation and silence engulfed the burial place. . . .

In the midst of the vast cemetery grounds is a small but frequently visited cabin. Peacefully resting within its confines is the body of Felix Roland Moumié, highly-respected son of Africa. Though his body lies alone in this small room, the cause for which he died binds millions together. He was a true fighter who gave his life in the just struggle for the emancipation of the African people. He will be remembered for ever by the Africans and by progressive and righteous people the world over. He is Cameroon's national hero, and former Chairman of the Union of the People of Cameroon.

When our car stopped in front of the cemetery, Comrade Liu Chang-sheng, head of the Delegation of the Chinese-African People's Friendship Association, and Mme. Moumié led the way to the cabin. Carrying a wreath we slowly crossed the sandy Atlantic beach, our hearts filled with love and respect for the

hero of the African people. The door of the cabin was opened, and inside was a light yellow wooden coffin, draped with a red flag embroidered with a huge black prawn. The prawn symbolizes Cameroon rising from its blood-soaked soil.

A deep silence seemed to envelop the room, as Mme. Moumié took out a brass key and unlocked the lid of the coffin. There, through a clear glass plate, we saw Moumié lying peacefully. His broad forehead and deep-set eyes made him appear as if he were still alive and meditating over the problems of his motherland. The sight brought back old memories to Mme. Moumié. Tears welled up in her eyes, and we sympathized with her in her grief.

Comrade Liu Chang-sheng tried to lighten her sorrow and offered condolences: "The death of brother Moumié was a great loss to the Cameroonian people but we are convinced that they will turn their grief into strength, and, with undaunted courage, will carry to success the unfinished cause for which Moumié gave his life. Felix Moumié was a good friend of the Chinese people and they will always revere his name. We feel sure that his motherland will be liberated and that his people will achieve complete victory, the finest consolation to his undying spirit." After a pause Comrade Liu Chang-sheng went on: "The 650 million Chinese people will for ever sympathize with and support the patriotic and righteous struggle of the Cameroonian people."

Mme. Moumié dried her eyes, nodded and said: "We are confident that the final victory will belong to our people. The Cameroonian people will always appreciate the strong support of the Chinese people."

I was deeply moved and felt tears were welling up in my eyes. I was conscious of a genuine brotherly love between the peoples of China and Africa. The Chinese people also suffered many hardships in the past, when the blood of our

people was being shed over our motherland. During those dark years, countless sons and daughters of our own people were butchered by the imperialists and reactionaries. The Chinese people, however, buried their martyrs, wiped away the bloodstains and continued the struggle until final victory was achieved. We are the witnesses of the passing of darkness and have welcomed the first rays of the bright dawn. Today, the road before the African people is likewise beset with many difficulties, but the golden dawn is sure to cast its rays on all parts of a new Africa.

Moumié's coffin was re-locked. We solemnly replaced the Cameroonian flag and laid our wreath over it.

The words on the wreath read: "We pay homage to Felix Moumié, the great, patriotic fighter of Cameroon. From the delegation of the Chinese-African People's Friendship Association."

LIFE OF A NATIONAL HERO

I had an interview with Mme. Moumié in Conakry where she briefly told me about the life of Felix Moumié.

Moumié was born into a peasant family in Cameroon in 1927. During his youth his life was very hard, but he was always diligent in study. He often went into the bush to gather firewood. With the money he got from the sale of the wood he bought text and other kinds of books. There were no secondary shools in Cameroon at that time, so during his adolescence, Moumié had to go to Brazzaville, the capital of the French Congo, to attend secondary school. It was there that he first rebelled against the colonialists. The students were badly treated by the French colonialists, and in protest they went on a hunger-strike and also refused to attend classes.

Moumié, who participated in this protest, was arrested and put in jail for four days.

When Moumié was in his teens, he decided to study medicine, and went to Senegal for that purpose. He continued to take part in student movements there until he returned to Cameroon in 1947. He was so thirsty for knowledge that he would not buy clothes and saved every copper he could to spend on books. His desire for books was founded on his determination to become enlightened so that he could play his part in the liberation of his country. In 1948 Moumié and Ruben Um Nyobe, one of the trade union leaders of Cameroon, became close friends and comrades-in-arms in the anti-colonialist struggle. With other comrades they organized the Union of the People of Cameroon. Thenceforward, the struggle of the Cameroonian people for national independence entered a new stage. Moumié was closely watched by the colonialist authorities, but he travelled the length and breadth of the country, practising medicine. At the same time he carried out propaganda among the people. The colonialists tried to bribe Moumié and offered him 10 million francs on condition that he would work for them. Moumié replied sarcastically: "I see! But there are 3,500,000 Cameroonians in this country. Do you expect to buy 3,500,000 people with 10 million francs? That works out at an average of a paltry three francs for each man. What a low price!" The colonialists found themselves in a very embarrassing situation.

When the Cameroonian people's movement for national independence was on the upsurge in 1955, the French colonialists carried out massacres in all the big cities throughout the country. More than five thousand patriots were slaughtered. Their blood dyed the streets of Douala and mingled with the waters of the Sanaga River. But the massacre hastened the people along the road towards armed struggle.

Armed resistance against the colonial rule broke out in the summer of 1956 under the leadership of the Union of the People of Cameroon in the dense jungles of Sanaga Maritime. Ruben Um Nyobe, Secretary-General of the Union of the People of Cameroon, was murdered by the French colonialists in 1958. The death of their leader brought grief to the Cameroonian people, but the flames of progress were unquenchable. Deprived of their beloved leader they closed their ranks, raised new leaders and plunged into the attack against their enemy with greater determination.

The French colonialists had long plotted to assassinate Moumié, then president of the Union of the People of Cameroon. He was compelled to live in exile. Moumié visited China in 1959, and was warmly welcomed by the Chinese people. This visit enabled him to see and understand the sincerity of the Chinese people's support for the struggle of the Cameroonian people. On his return home, Moumié went to live in the Congo where he fought side by side with Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba against colonialism. Unfortunately, in 1960, when Moumié left the Congo for Accra via Geneva, he was murdered. Gangsters of the French terrorist organization, "La Main Rouge", shamelessly poisoned the great fighter of the African people.

As Mme. Veuve Felix Roland Moumié narrated these incidents from Moumié's short but glorious life, their ten-year-old daughter, holding a mango in her hand, listened attentively to the unfolding of the life-story of her heroic father. The exposure of the barbarity of imperialism made a deep impression on her.

"The French colonialists thought that the murder of Moumié would throttle the struggle of the Cameroonian people," said Mme. Moumié. "But our people's armed forces are attacking them from every part of Cameroon. Twelve of the thirteen

districts in Cameroon are under martial law from morning to night. In the battle fought in the Douala district in November 1960, the colonialists lost 350 troops."

Towards the close of the interview, Mme. Moumié reiterated: "Do tell the Chinese people that we Cameroonian people have full confidence in our cause and are firmly persisting in the struggle. We are fully aware that the great, liberated people of China will for ever stand at our side and support our struggle for freedom and independence."

MARTYRS OF AFRICA, REST IN PEACE

The portraits of Felix Moumié and Patrice Lumumba are hung side by side in the residence of Mme. Moumié. These two heroic men were true comrades-in-arms in the anti-imperialist struggles. During their life time, each of them shouldered the burdens of their suffering motherlands, and led their people in the fight against imperialism. At the beginning of 1960, Moumié was invited to Leopoldville to study with Lumumba, the subject being the anti-imperialist struggle of the Congolese people. These two comrades-in-arms, representing the people of two African states, understood and supported each other. They were both hated by the new and old colonialists, who heartlessly murdered first Moumié, then Lumumba within a year. The imperialists thought that the newly spilt blood of Moumié and Lumumba would frighten the Cameroonian and the Congolese peoples into submission.

On the liberated soil of Guinea, the people are still mourning the death of these two great and beloved sons of Africa. Our Guinean friends described the Conakry citizens' great joy when Lumumba visited Guinea on July 6, 1960. Six hours before Lumumba was scheduled to arrive, the welcoming crowd

were already lining the streets for miles. Literally everybody in Conakry was out to welcome him. A young Guinean friend told us that when he heard the sad news of Lumumba's death, he choked with grief and refused to believe that it was true. He hesitated to pass on the news to his family for fear of upsetting them. The murder of Lumumba was finally confirmed; Conakry sadly lowered its flags to half mast. All African-owned stores stopped business and all amusements ceased as a token of deep mourning. The people then held a huge demonstration of protest against the dastardly crime of colonialism. Angry shouts of "Down with the New and Old Colonialism!" re-echoed through the air. The people of Bamako wore black arm-bands in homage to Lumumba's memory. Indignant demonstrators in Accra shouted: "Blood-Guilty U.S. Imperialists, Get Out of the Congo!" When the demonstrators passed the office of the United Nations, they tore the U.N. flag to shreds. Eight hundred students of Dakar University, undaunted by a police blockade, dashed out of the school gates and joined in a mass demonstration with the Dakar citizens. A wave of protest against the American and Belgium imperialists' crime of the murdering of Lumumba surged through Rabat, Cairo and other centres throughout Africa. Moumié and Lumumba are regarded not only as the sons of Cameroon and of the Congo, but of all Africa. The people of Africa are dedicated to a common cause, and are being welded together in a common struggle against a common enemy — imperialism.

Moumié and Lumumba have passed away, but the torch of their ideals is still a beacon light to the people of Africa.

The African people will follow the footsteps of the martyred Moumié and Lumumba and countless others like them, and will courageously advance to a bright future.

Martyrs of Africa, rest in peace!

RANDOM NOTES ON THE CULTURAL LEGACY OF WEST AFRICA

The culture of all races differs in scope and depth. In a way it is like the bed of an ocean, a crystal palace adorned with red corals, strange fish and animals, multi-coloured shells and innumerable other treasures.

West Africa, hidden in oblivion for many centuries, carved up, trampled underfoot, misrepresented by Western imperialism, is beginning to assert itself. The traditional culture of West Africa, embodying the culture of many different races, is as rich and colourful as the vast boundless ocean. The study of African culture is still in its infancy. Sealed off from the rest of the world for a long time, Africa's cultural treasures have yet to be revealed.

RICH VERNACULAR LITERATURE

Stories recounted from one generation to another are an essential part of Africa's literary heritage. The growth of African literature is closely related to the development of the African languages.

For many centuries, West Africa has been inhabited by people belonging to many different tribal groups, each having its own spoken language, such as Fulbé, Malinké, Soussou and Kissi in Guinea, Bambara, Ouolof and Sarakolé in Mali, Ouolof and Toucouleur in Senegal, Djerma, Haoussa and Kanouri in Niger, Moro and Lobi in Upper Volta, Faute and Guan in

Dahomey, Ewe in Togo, Ga, Ewe and Ashanti in Ghana, and Haoussa, Yoruba and Ibo in Nigeria.

The rich experiences, gained by the peoples through many centuries of labour and life, form the foundation of Africa's literary wealth. Each language is an effective medium for the dissemination of vernacular literature.

Some of the languages in West Africa have no written form as yet, but some of them, like Haoussa and Fulbé, and a few others, can be written in the Latin or the Arabic alphabets. Because of widespread Mohammedanism the Arabic alphabet was the earliest one practised in West Africa. A very famous Mohammedan university with a library was already in existence during the 14th and 15th centuries, near the bend of the middle reaches of the Niger River, in the city of Tombouctou. Here it is still possible to find Arabic manuscripts of classical books in the people's homes. The mosques promoted the use of the Arabic alphabet, and as soon as a believer learned the Koran by heart he had practically mastered the alphabet. In West Africa there are villages where, it is said, the Mohammedan elders teach the children the Koran and the Arabic alphabet. The use of the Latin alphabet came into practice at the end of the 19th century.

Chronicles in Arabic, like the annals of the Kingdom of Songhai of the 15th century, are still preserved. There are also chronicles and epic poems written in Haoussa and Fulbé. A scholar of the Fulbé tribe living in the Niger river city of Ségou, now part of Mali, wrote an epic poem in 1890, extolling the heroic life and military expeditions of the national hero, El Hadj Omar. The poem has 1,189 stanzas.

The preservation of these rare epic poems is not always through the medium of written records, some have been memorized and passed from mouth to mouth through the ages. Blind artists, street-singers and Mohammedan elders wandered from

place to place recounting these epic stories to the people. The contents of the poems were enriched and developed as they were handed down from one generation to the next until they have become part of the literary heritage of the nation.

The legacy of vernacular literature of West Africa includes not only literary works, whose original versions have been on record since ancient times, but also folk legends and ballads which have been handed down from mouth to mouth and are still widely circulated among the people. The latter are often far richer in content than the written works, and few such treasures are to be found in any classical writings. They have been ignored by missionary schools and by the foreign institutions run by the colonialists. Nevertheless, they have been treasured for many centuries by the common people, because they reflect the life of the people and such records never die.

BEAUTIFUL FOLKLORES

The people of Africa are great creators of fables and fairy stories. Many of them are about inanimate objects, animals and plants. They reflect the sorrows, joys and aspirations of the people, and are imbued with strong imagination and much humour. Such things as animals, rocks, water and even household utensils are personified as having a soul. These stories bring to life a vast number of objects such as, oceans, rivers and precipices, wolves and rhinoceros, wild cats and quails, crocodiles and spiders, rabbits and tortoise, potatoes and flowers. All speak and behave like humans and participate in the life of the people.

These fairy tales and fables are extremely beautiful and moving, and some of them are masterpieces of prose poetry. There is a story about a girl, who from her infancy lived beside

the sea, played on the golden sands, bathed in the shallow water of the bay, dashed in and out of the waves catching crabs and picking up beautiful shells. . . . When she grew up, she married a young man, who had also grown up beside the sea. Each day, carrying her baby daughter along with her, she went to work in the fields near the sea-shore. She could not give proper attention to the child because of her work, so she sang to her friends, the waves, asking for their help:

Ah, Wind and Waves!
This plate I give to you to preserve,
This wooden bowl of sour milk, I give to you to preserve,
I'll also give to you my child to rock to sleep.

A rich imagination lies at the basis of the story, which recounts how the waves softly splashed against the little girl, carefully raised her and carried her to the coolest spots. When sunset dyed the western sky a rosy-pink, the mother, tired from the long day of toil, would return to the shore and again sing to the waves. The waves, tenderly caressing the child, would then roll gently towards the shore and restore it to the mother's bosom.

Another very interesting African folk story is about a crocodile. This tyrant of the waters swallowed all the fish that came his way, but one day the crocodile encountered a brave little fish who cleverly and courageously fought against him. The little fish finally overcame the crocodile and meted out vengeance for all the fish of the sea. As the crocodile was dying, he lost his arrogance and greatly feared that the fish would rip his hide apart. That is why, according to the legend, crocodiles are still afraid to die in the water, and always crawl ashore before death.

The essence of African folk legend, as I see it, is its close relation to the traditional religion of Africa. The majority

of the African people believe in Fetishism, a faith which has more than one god. In the minds of the African people, everything in the material world has life and a soul. They worship the gods of the sea, thunder, lightning, iron and fire. They have also a serpent god which is regarded as the symbol of plenty. When a rainbow appears after a shower, the people say it is the serpent god. Many of Africa's fairy tales and much of its folklore testify to the rich imagination of its people.

LEGENDS AND ROMANCE

Many of West Africa's historical folk stories, which have been handed down by the people, are of the singsong type. The singsong style, as used by the people's artists, praises and keeps alive the merits and deeds of ancient kings and heroes. This literature, in the vernacular, which is widely circulated among the people, is a record of the history of their homeland, and, as such, is treasured by the masses.

I came to know a folk artist when I was visiting Mali. He kept his name secret, and preferred to be called "the great Mali singer". He wore an Arab robe and played an African four-string lute. In singsong fashion, he narrated the story of Soundiata, the founder of the Kingdom of Mali in the 13th century:

"It is said that in the 13th century Soundiata, the greatest man of Africa, was born.

"The father of Soundiata had nine wives and the mother of Soundiata was the ninth. She was not the favourite of his father, and was compelled to return to her old home in Niani. She made her living by selling African wine in the streets. There she gave birth to Soundiata. At the age of seven, Soundiata

was extraordinarily tall and strong but he couldn't walk, so people scoffed at the poor unhappy mother.

"The mother was poor, starved and haggard-looking. In the spring, she tried to climb the trees to pick the tender leaves for food, but her limbs were too weak. Her son noticed her secretly weeping and asked: 'Why do you weep, Mother?' His mother answered: 'What can I do? I've nothing to feed you, and you cannot walk. I'm very troubled.' Soundiata was very sorry for his mother and wishing to console her, he said, 'Don't worry, Mother, I'll find a way out of our trouble!'"

At this point the singer rapidly plucked the strings of his lute, and after an interlude that resembled the rolling of the waves, continued with the story.

"There was a blacksmith, Soundiata's neighbour, who sympathized with Soundiata's sad fate and cast an iron rod for him. With the help of the rod, Soundiata tried to stand up but his weight bent the rod into a bow. The kind-hearted neighbour then felled a big tree and made Soundiata a walking stick. When Soundiata used the huge stick to prop himself up it broke in two. The mother wept with despair. But Soundiata was not foiled. Consoling his mother he said: 'Don't cry, Mother. My day will come. I will rise and establish the kingdom of Mali!' Soundiata put his hands on his mother's knees to support himself and again attempted to rise. Quickly trying to help him, his mother said: 'I haven't the strength to support you!' Soundiata replied: 'No, Mother, sons can never be stronger than their mothers.' Thus saying Soundiata rested his weight on his mother's knees and then sprang to his feet."

The music of the lute became more vigorous.

"'Oh, Soundiata is standing!' The people of Niani, awakened from their sleep, rushed out to spread the news. The ex-

citement was too much for the mother. She collapsed and died."

Then the story teller went on to recount the complicated life and exploits of young Soundiata. The exploits were more like legends than historical events. He described Soundiata as being a giant with mysterious power, who won all of the battles that he fought.

I also read a historical novel about Soundiata which was written by a Guinean author and based on the story of Guinean singsong artists. It seemed closer to the historical facts than the Mali version. Both have their merits from the viewpoint of artistic creation. According to the Guinean version, after Soundiata reached the age of maturity, he lived the life of a wanderer, and roved to the neighbouring kingdoms of Mausa Konkon, Tabon and Wagadore. There he overcame many difficulties, defeated his enemies and finally returned to his native land. In welcoming his triumphant return to Mandingo, the people sang:

He has returned,
Bringing happiness with him,
Wherever Soundiata ventures,
Happiness is sure to follow.

Soundiata's righteous army was welcomed by the people. His troops were offered cola-nuts and something to drink by the women, who also laid a carpet of homespun cloth on the ground for their horses to walk upon. The children waved small green twigs and cheered him. . . . The palace singer sang:

Revive Niani!
The city of your ancestors.

Soundiata moved the capital to Niani and laid the foundation of the Kingdom of Mali, promulgated laws and set up a system

of government. The people lived in peace and were content at their work. They happily tilled the soil and rid the land of thieves. The Kingdom of Mali lasted for two centuries.

These are of course legends, but they on the whole reflect historical events. A famous Arabian traveller, of the 19th century, named Ibu Battuta described Niani, the capital of Mali, in one of his works. "The country is well governed. The inhabitants and travellers have no worry about bandits and robbers." This was the most prosperous period of the West Sudan Mandingo civilization, and the people, richly imaginative, deified their favourite hero. In their wisdom they re-created his image and passed on these legendary stories as a record of their own glorious history.

FOLK SINGERS OF WEST AFRICA

African friends told us that if we called on some of the native folk singers known as the "groot" in the ancient villages of the Mandingoes or in the beautiful mountain village of Fouta Djalon, they would play their lutes and sing many moving songs for us. The songs, they said, recount historical events and are flavoured with myths and legends. They extol national heroes and the history of their motherland and praise the life of brave hunters and the honest labour of the common people. Since independence has been achieved the singsong people have composed many new songs and stories to glorify the people's victory over colonialism and the happiness of the common people.

These anonymous folk singers are true to a tradition which has been handed down through the ages. It is said that during the prosperous years of the Mandingo civilization, the kings of a number of West African kingdoms kept an official at their side, whose job it was to sing. These officials were learned

scholars and also advised the kings on political and ceremonial matters. Relying solely on their memory they sang the exploits of past kings and the laws and decrees of their kingdoms. They were in charge of the ceremonial rites that were practised in accordance with old traditions and customs.

After the French colonialists' invasion of West Africa in the latter part of the 19th century, such singers were compelled to leave their kings, and wandered from place to place, earning their living by singing. The French colonialists dumped their "Western culture" on the cities of West Africa and by belittling the national culture, tried to make the Africans look down on their own cultural heritage. The people of the many West African nationalities, however, are determined to preserve their own national culture and art, and many of these singers are still to be found in Mali, Guinea, Senegal and the Ivory Coast. Through the years, and in the various West African countries, many of them have developed their own style of singing and specialized in certain traditional story-songs. These artists, in enriching the old and creating new songs, have preserved the best of the people's wisdom and artistic talents. Like the water of the Niger that flows over the dry land of West Africa, these songs have brought happiness to the hearts of the people of West Africa.

A FOLK ORCHESTRA OF AFRICA

In Guinea I made the acquaintance of a native songster who came from an old family of folk singers. Ever since childhood he has been learning and practising the national music handed down by his ancestors. After the independence of Guinea, he became the art director of the State Musical Troupe, and his greatest ambition now is to see national art thriving in Guinea.

I enjoyed an opportunity to attend several of the troupe's rehearsals which were held in a semi-open-air hall by the side of the Atlantic ocean. The beautiful and harmonious Guinean melodies, which were accompanied by the soft whispers of the ocean waves, still linger in my memory.

This musical troupe was organized in the early part of 1961. The government of Guinea gathered together the marimba players, four-stringed lute players, flutists and African guitar players from different parts of the country. There are now more than a dozen artists in the troupe, including four female vocalists. The troupe is equipped with many kinds of Guinean folk instruments. One type of lute has twenty-one strings which produces a sweet soothing sound, which is likened to lovers pouring forth their deepest feelings. The four-stringed lutes produce a vigorous and rousing war-drum effect. I was told that this instrument is excellent as an accompaniment for battle tunes, and that its sounds are reminiscent of the ancient battlefields of Africa. In the past, the four-stringed lute was often played to accompany the stimulating tones of the flute when the singer stood beside the king and sang. One of the songs was as follows:

Great warriors fight a hundred battles,
To protect the motherland,
Your ancestors, your fathers,
Have all fought to safeguard our sacred land.

The troupe was also equipped with percussion instruments. The "balaphone", in the shape of a xylophone, was completely made of hard wood and its music, like that of a murmuring brook, was most pleasing. The metal castanets were shaped like tiny hoes, and the African guitar and many kinds of African drums provided clear lively rhythm. The art director told me that this was the first time in the history of Guinea that so

many folk instruments, hitherto used only in particular parts of the country, had been gathered together and played by one troupe. He and his colleagues have undertaken a work of great cultural significance. They are restoring and shedding new light on the precious folk music heritage of their motherland, which for more than half a century was neglected by the French colonialists.

I have heard him sing a number of times. He was gifted with a beautiful and rich tenor voice that filled the hall. Accompanied by the entire orchestra, he sang a battle song, in praise of the expedition made by the national hero Samori Touré. He sang to the battle rhythm of the four-stringed lute and occasionally plucked the strings of his own guitar. He also sang a few of his own recent compositions. One of his works was in praise of Conakry, the capital of his motherland, another was dedicated to the mothers of Africa.

COLOURFUL AFRICAN DANCES

Dancing is indispensable in the life of the African people, and both sexes, old as well as young, enjoy it. They sing and dance joyously and vigorously as they keep in step with the rhythm of the tam-tam. Their joyful optimistic spirit is that of a people who will never be defeated.

National dances are rarely seen in the big cities of West Africa, because of the intrusion of "Western style of life", but in the vast rural areas, peasants and herdsmen dance and sing all the year round. They dance not only during times of happiness such as weddings, but also at funeral ceremonies. They dance at religious ceremonies and to celebrate both bumper harvests and the monsoon season. On hunters' day a particularly vigorous and exciting dance takes place.

In Accra, the capital of Ghana, I saw the warriors' dance of the Ewe people. Scores of men, wearing red caps, and short pants covered over with aprons, shuffled bare-footed in the sand, creating a strange and vigorous rhythm. Keeping rhythm with variations in the drum beats, the dancers suddenly threw themselves into prostrate positions, then they moved swiftly forwards or backwards as if attacking or retreating. One moment, they swung their arms and shouted, the next moment they pounded their chest and took oaths. Then they assumed the postures of horse-riders, and upon the order for advance, the men sprang forward, singing: "Advance, break down the stronghold of the enemy!" The women lined up at their rear and performed a supporting dance, singing: "Go forward, men, we support you!"

Mention of African dances reminds me of a poem written by the German poet, Heinrich Heine, which gives a vivid description of a slave-ship sailing the Atlantic. On the deck the white slave traders whipped the slaves mercilessly to force them to dance for their amusement. Two verses of the poem read:

Let music sound! The blacks shall dance
Right here on the deck of the slave-ship.
And if any thinks it not quite to his taste,
He shall feel the lash of the slave-whip.

A hundred Negroes, women and men,
They shout and skip round quite madly;
And with every flying leap they take
The fetters' clang-clang grates badly.

The age that Heine wrote about is gone for ever. The men and women of Africa now dance because it is a pleasure to them. To them dancing is as refreshing as the morning dew,

bringing happiness to life and labour. They will never again dance under the threat of a lash. Today, they dance on the soil that they themselves fought to make free and independent.

DISCOVERY OF INEXHAUSTIBLE CULTURAL TREASURE

Great changes have taken place in Africa and as a result of the long struggle waged by the people, many African countries have successively gained their independence. The African people are eager to get rid of the shameful traces of demoralizing Western cultures, revive their own cultural legacies, and create a new culture for Africa. In many African countries the question of developing their own national spoken and written languages has already been considered. Public opinion and the intellectual circles in Africa have declared that the struggle for the development of a national language is part and parcel of the struggle to develop the national culture.

The question of inheriting and developing the national art and culture has aroused the attention of the press and the cultural and artistic circles of West Africa. The *Ghana Times* devoted a special column to an open discussion on the national language, music and culture of Ghana. The subject aroused widespread interest among its readers. One of them, in his letter to the editors stated that to develop the people's ability and their own style of writing, they must first rid their minds of every concept of "not being up to standard" and also cast aside the European influences which tend to create the impression that anything African is unrefined, shallow and inferior. Another reader pointed out that music was one of the cultural treasures of Africa. "In the past we have made many contributions to music and why should we cast our music aside now?" he asked.

Keita Fodeba, once the head of the Guinean Dance Troupe and now the Minister of Defence for the Republic of Guinea, said in the preface to a pamphlet entitled *Dancing People* that in the days when he was oppressed and discriminated against by the White men he was forced to leave his native country and wander in the big cities of Africa — from Bamako to Dakar. During these wanderings he gradually learned that the so-called "culture" of the foreigners had greatly influenced the African way of life, tradition, habits and ethical views. As a result, he continued, the African cities were gradually getting away from their own traditional culture and coming more and more under the influence of the "Western way of life". The people who were preserving the treasures of their national culture were to be found mainly in the countryside. Mr. Fodeba pointed out that the preservation of the national dances of Africa, which sprang from life itself, was an important task confronting the present-day people of Africa.

I am confident that the national culture of Africa, following the development of the national liberation movement, will enter into a great renaissance. Of course, this will not be a mere repetition of the old culture. Rather will it be the birth of the new and glorious culture of the new Africa, based on the rich foundation of its old culture. The African people will take it upon themselves to create a great culture on the soil of their own motherlands.

西非八国漫記
冯之丹 著
*
外文出版社出版（北京）
1963年8月第一版
编号：（英）12050—7
00100
3—E—602P

THE GREAT TURNING POINT

This is a collection of personal reminiscences of China's revolutionary struggles in the period between the end of the War of Resistance Against Japan in 1945 and the end of the War of Liberation in 1949—a decisive period in the battle between the revolutionary and counter-revolutionary forces in China, and one which led to victory for the people and the founding of the New China.

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Published by
FOREIGN LANGUAGES PRESS
PEKING